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The Politics of Modernizing Short-Range Nuclear Forces in West Germany

Ronald D. Asmus

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The future of NATO nuclear modernization plans has again become a topic of controversy within the alliance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Federal Republic of Germany, where the bulk of the remaining short-range nuclear forces (SNF) are stationed--forces whose support is essential for current NATO modernization plans. This report examines the origins of changing West German attitudes toward nuclear modernization in the wake of the treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces signed in December 1987. It analyzes the factors shaping West German attitudes toward NATO's planned modernization of SNF. The author concludes that the last-minute compromise reached at the May 1989 Brussels summit may have temporarily defused, but has not resolved, the underlying pressures that transformed the SNF modernization issue into a divisive dispute. He suggests that, while reconfirming its support for the principles of a possible restructuring of nuclear deterrence and the current strategy of flexible response, the United States should lay out the parameters and principles of a possible restructuring of the alliance's theater nuclear posture. The goal would be to create a new structure that would simultaneously satisfy German political needs and make military and strategic sense.

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PREFACE

This report examines the origins of changing West German attitudes toward nuclear modernization in the wake of the treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces signed in December 1987. It analyzes the factors shaping West German attitudes toward NATO's planned modernization of short-range nuclear forces (SNF)—factors that led to an open dispute in the alliance over SNF modernization in the early months of 1989. On the basis of this analysis, the report then considers the implications of domestic political trends in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) for future alliance decisions on the modernization of NATO nuclear forces in Western Europe.

Research for this report was concluded in August 1989. Subsequent political developments in central Europe and the pending unification of Germany have radically altered the political environment in which the future of nuclear weapons in Germany is being discussed. Sections of this report inevitably have been overtaken by events, and decisions have already been made on many policy issues this report addresses. Nevertheless, this report provides a useful historical analysis and analyzes trend lines that are likely to continue to shape the new debate in Germany over the future of nuclear weapons.

This research was sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans of the United States Air Force Europe (USAFE/XP) as part of the National Security Strategies Program of Project AIR FORCE. It is intended to be of interest to those responsible for planning force structure in Europe, as well as to those responsible for relations between the United States and West European NATO members, particularly the FRG. This report is one of several documents generated in the course of this research.

SUMMARY

The future of NATO nuclear modernization plans has again become a topic of controversy in the alliance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), where the bulk of the remaining short-range nuclear forces (SNF) are stationed—forces whose support is essential for current NATO modernization plans. This report's purpose is threefold. First, it analyzes the origins of the erosion in elite and public attitudes toward NATO nuclear strategy in West Germany that emerged from the intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) debate and that has subsequently been reinforced by perceptions that the Soviet threat has diminished—perceptions linked to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy reforms.

Second, the report examines how such political pressures contributed to the dispute over SNF modernization that unfolded during the first six months of 1989 and that threatened to cast a shadow over the May 1989 Brussels summit commemorating NATO's 40th anniversary. Third, it projects future West German attitudes about SNF issues by examining how the respective positions of the FRG's major political actors are tied to their long-term views toward existing NATO nuclear strategy, the Soviet Union, and U.S.-West German relations.

This report's conclusion is that the last-minute compromise reached at the May 1989 Brussels summit may have temporarily defused, but certainly has not resolved, the underlying pressures that transformed the SNF modernization issue into such a divisive dispute. The SNF modernization issue was elevated to a major political issue precisely because it became intertwined with an array of issues: the future West German commitment to nuclear deterrence and flexible response; how the alliance should respond to changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and whether or under what circumstances NATO should consider changes in its own military strategy and force posture; and how the alliance should best respond to the sovereignty issue in domestic West German politics in light of growing West German influence and assertiveness in the councils of the alliance and in East-West relations in Europe.

None of these issues have been fully resolved. Against this backdrop, there are no guarantees that the SNF modernization issue will not return to haunt the alliance, and several strong reasons suggest that it will. In the United States itself, whether the Brussels compromise will be sufficient to convince the U.S. Congress to allocate

the necessary funds to continue current research and development remains unclear. The combination of increased costs and the political attention the issue has generated will increasingly attract attention in the Congress at a time when the Bonn government, faced with federal elections, will continue to sidestep the issue. This may result in the administration's having more difficulty getting ongoing funding approved without some hard questions being raised about the West German commitment to eventual deployment of this system.

Meanwhile, in Bonn the consensus underlying the current coalition's stance on SNF is of uncertain durability and could be undercut by one of several factors. A real danger remains that national security issues will increasingly become subject to the fluidity and maneuvering of political parties jockeying to maximize their popularity at a time of increasing uncertainty and fluidity in West German politics as the next federal election approaches. In light of public opinion polls showing a strong majority opposing nuclear modernization in principle, for any party to favor any form of SNF modernization will only become increasingly difficult because doing so may mean committing political hara-kiri.

As a result, the SNF issue has become the proverbial can that has been kicked down the road in the hope that the underlying issues may be resolved more easily in the days or months ahead. Many hopes are currently pinned to the belief that an agreement on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe at the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) talks in Vienna might ease the pressures on the nuclear issue. A CFE agreement will not necessarily or automatically prove to be a panacea for past differences over SNF modernization, however. Indeed, a CFE agreement may well revive old divisions about the future of NATO's nuclear strategy because such an agreement will likely generate renewed political pressures for cuts in current nuclear stocks. Moreover, the alliance has painted itself into a corner by relying far too long on the simple and erroneous public argument that the conventional imbalance alone justified the presence of large numbers of nuclear weapons in Western Europe—above all, in the FRG.

The compromise achieved at the May 1989 Brussels summit has, therefore, given the alliance a new window of opportunity to come to grips with the task of trying to define a nuclear posture that corresponds to changing German political requirements, makes strategic and military sense, and does not immediately become hostage to Soviet arms control initiatives or political trends in the East. Achieving this goal will still entail bridging a considerable divide in the alliance. Outside West Germany, policymakers must better grasp the important shift in West German attitudes toward nuclear weapons and

the enduring political pressures this has produced. Changing West German attitudes toward nuclear weapons are being driven by twin forces: the delegitimization of nuclear deterrence in the FRG, and the perception that the threat has diminished.

West German policymakers will continue to face strong pressures for further reductions in the overall numbers of nuclear weapons on West German soil, regardless of the future composition of the ruling coalition in Bonn.

In view of the uncertainties and potential divisiveness of the issues involved, a perhaps understandable tendency to adopt a wait-and-see attitude on the SNF issue and to hope that these issues will gradually sort themselves out in the West German debate exists. That such issues will become any easier to grapple with several years hence, however, is not guaranteed. But for Washington to use this window to steer this process in a constructive direction, several things must occur. The first is a better understanding of and sensitivity to the changed domestic political context in which any West German government must operate. Despite the merits of the INF Treaty, it has contributed to creating a climate in which any form of nuclear modernization in the FRG has become politically difficult. In the past decade, U.S. policy actions have contributed to eroding support for nuclear deterrence on both the left and the right in West Germany.

Second, although rolling back the process of eroding support for nuclear weapons in the FRG will be difficult, a future U.S. administration can nevertheless shape the context in which such issues are debated through its own actions. Only the United States can take the lead in shaping a new nuclear force posture that better corresponds to German political needs while maintaining some strategic rationale. Washington itself must demonstrate a willingness to assume leadership in shaping future alliance nuclear strategy—especially vis-à-vis a Bonn government facing strong domestic pressure and feeling victimized by past U.S. policy actions. In return, Bonn should be granted the predominant voice on the timing and details of any modernization package and on its implementation.

The following measures could serve as steps toward reaching this goal. First, while reconfirming its support for the principles of nuclear deterrence and the current strategy of flexible response, the United States should lay out the parameters and principles of a possible restructuring of the alliance's theater nuclear posture. The goal would be to create a new structure that would simultaneously satisfy German political needs and make military and strategic sense. This restructuring would entail both elements of reductions and modernization. The objectives would be the following:

- Significantly reducing the overall number of nuclear warheads in Western Europe—above all in the FRG;
- Maintaining a residual number of systems in all categories (land-, air-, and sea-based) for reasons of survivability and credibility;
- Enhancing the remaining systems' range for both political and military reasons—namely, to defuse German concerns about "singularization" and to maximize operational flexibility;
- Increasing qualitative standards for the remaining systems according to the principle "the fewer the number of systems, the higher the qualitative demands."

Such a restructuring offers several clear advantages. Most reductions would come from systems with the shortest range and largest numbers—and therefore of great political concern to West Germany. Similarly, modernization would focus on elements with the greatest range and therefore the greatest deterrent value. Such a move would also maximize operational flexibility and correspond to West German political needs. The end goal would be the creation of a smaller, militarily more robust, and politically more durable NATO nuclear force posture.

Such a structure would ideally include a limited contingent of follow-on to Lance (FOTL) surface-to-surface missiles. From a strict military-operational viewpoint, the most desirable modernization option may well be FOTL. And in many ways, FOTL, with its extended range, would also seem to correspond to the West German desire for systems with extended range. That the FOTL issue has become a potent political symbol in a broader and politicized debate—and a lightning rod for criticism—is nonetheless clear. Currently no consensus exists for deploying a FOTL in the FRG, and building one will necessitate a major investment of effort and political capital.

Although it is pursuing a strategy of maintaining residual land-based nuclear forces, NATO should make the short-range attack missile-tactical (SRAM-T) the highest priority in its nuclear modernization. Though dual-capable aircraft have traditionally attracted less political controversy than land-based missiles, no guarantee exists that air-based systems can be kept outside the political fray of nuclear modernization, especially if FOTL must be abandoned for political reasons.

Conventional wisdom dictates that any modernization decisions are only feasible in the FRG in an arms control context. However, for several reasons the alliance should give careful consideration to implementing such a restructuring package on a unilateral basis. First, reductions in nuclear artillery would be difficult, if not impossible, to

verify. Second, the primary motivation for such a restructuring would be internal and political, based above all on the need to shore up German support for NATO nuclear strategy. Third, the package's modernization elements should be kept as isolated as possible from arms control negotiations lest the alliance run the risk of implementing reductions with modernization decisions held hostage to East-West talks.

Finally, a unilateral restructuring would underscore the message that NATO is seeking to define a nuclear posture that is a function of its own political and military needs and criteria, not of the Soviet threat in a process of flux. It would reinforce the message that arms control cannot and should not be seen as an automatic panacea for all security problems. Last, but certainly not least, such a unilateral restructuring proposal would demonstrate that NATO's nuclear posture must have a logic of its own corresponding to Western strategy and that the alliance still needs nuclear forces independent of the ups and downs of reform in the East.

The Bush administration has thus far taken important steps to reaffirm its commitment to nuclear deterrence and to articulate its own vision for the future of East-West relations in Europe. The high marks the president received for his European summitry in mid-1989 were undoubtedly linked to his willingness and ability to address such issues and to lay out at least the broad outlines of a Western vision of beyond containment. The administration should now move to capitalize on that goodwill and develop proposals for a nuclear posture that corresponds to its own vision of beyond containment.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE FALLOUT OF INF	4
III. THE ORIGINS OF THE SNF DISPUTE	16
IV. ALTERNATIVE COALITIONS	33
V. FUTURE PROSPECTS	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

I. INTRODUCTION

Meeting in Montebello in 1983, NATO defense ministers called for a follow-on to Lance (FOTL) surface-to-surface missile, a new tactical air-to-surface missile (TASM), and the modernization of nuclear artillery and nuclear-capable aircraft as part of a package that simultaneously foresaw an additional reduction of 1400 nuclear weapons. These measures were intended both to improve and to rationalize NATO military capabilities, as well as to assuage public concerns about a nuclear buildup at a time in which the alliance was planning to introduce 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles in line with the NATO 1979 dual track decision.¹

The modernization elements of the Montebello decision have since been called into question in the wake of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty of December 1987. Although differences over the modernization of NATO's short-range nuclear forces (SNF) have emerged in several Western countries, these differences have become a major and divisive political issue in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), particularly insofar as a potential FOTL surface-to-surface missile is concerned. In the spring of 1989, differences over SNF modernization, the conditions under which such systems should be included in future arms control negotiations, the desirable outcome of such talks, and above all the question of the implication of a potential third zero outcome for land-based missiles threatened both to lead to an embarrassing public display of alliance disunity in the weeks before the NATO summit and to put new strains on the ruling coalition in Bonn. Although last-minute diplomacy produced a successful compromise on the SNF issue, the durability of this consensus remains to be tested.

At first glance, the issues involved in the SNF debate appear rather simple and straightforward, revolving around the implementation of the 1983 Montebello decision, particularly the FOTL issue. The SNF dispute of the early months of 1989 cannot properly be understood, however, as a dispute that revolved exclusively or even primarily around a specific missile system. Indeed, many observers on both sides of the Atlantic would undoubtedly have shared the view of former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who publicly termed the FOTL a

¹See "Kommunique ueber die 34. Ministertagung der Nuklearen Planungsgruppe der NATO in Montebello (Kanada) am 27. und 28. Oktober 1983," *Europa Archiv*, Folge 5, 1984, pp. D124-D127.

third-rate strategic issue that hardly deserved to be raised to the level of a test case of NATO's cohesion and virility.² Rather, the reason the SNF modernization generated so much attention and divisiveness was because it became a catalyst for and a symbol in a much broader debate unfolding in the alliance, particularly in West Germany. In other words, the SNF discussion became a surrogate debate in which the military pros and cons of a missile system were overtaken by highly politicized issues. These issues included

- The future of nuclear deterrence and of NATO's current strategy of flexible response on West German soil in the wake of both the divisive debates of the early 1980s over Euromissile deployment and the subsequent INF Treaty;
- The proper Western response to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and reforms in Soviet domestic and foreign policy;
- The accommodation of a more self-assertive FRG and growing West German influence on the existing framework of the Western alliance.

In part, the SNF debate is but the most recent episode in an ongoing saga of intraalliance disputes. Questions about the proper role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy, U.S. leadership in the alliance, and the FRG's proper role in Europe are by no means new in the annals of alliance history. Similarly, perhaps no question has proved more difficult for successive West German governments to deal with in the postwar period than that of nuclear modernization.³ Behind the military facade of strategy debates conducted in the NATO vernacular lie core political issues revolving around prestige, dependence, and risk sharing—in short, the very stuff that international politics is made of.⁴

The SNF modernization debate that emerged in the early months of 1989 became such a contentious dispute in the alliance precisely because it touched upon broader political and strategic issues. It also revealed the unprecedented constellation of heterogeneous pressures for changes in alliance policy emanating in domestic West German politics, as well as changes occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern

²See Schmidt's speech before the North Atlantic Assembly reprinted in *Die Welt*, December 14, 1988.

³For background on German attitudes toward nuclear weapons, see Catherine Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1975.

⁴Perhaps the best discussion of the contentious role of nuclear weapons in alliance history can be found in the chapter "NATO and Nuclear Weapons: No End of a Lesson" in Josef Joffe, *The Limited Partnership: Europe, the United States, and the Burdens of Alliance*, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass., 1987.

Europe. In short, it revealed a political environment vastly different from the one that confronted NATO military planners in Montebello in 1983.

As a result, the politics of nuclear modernization in the FRG has become a central factor in the equation that will shape NATO's future nuclear posture. The fashion in which the issue of nuclear modernization is dealt with (or not dealt with) will therefore not only set an important precedent for future management of the domestic security debate in the FRG, it will simultaneously be an important step in staking out the overall direction in which West German security thinking is likely to evolve at a time when East-West relations are in considerable flux.

Any discussion of current West German attitudes toward the future of theater nuclear forces in post-INF West Germany must start, however, with an examination of the genesis of this broader security policy debate in which the question of nuclear modernization plays such an important role. That such a review is widely perceived as necessary reflects changes in the domestic and strategic environment in which West German foreign and security policy must be formulated and implemented—changes increasingly viewed as having eroded the foundations upon which past security policy has previously been based.

II. THE FALLOUT OF INF

Seven years have now passed since NATO began implementing the dual track decision, and two years have passed since the contours of the double zero agreement emerged as the basis for the INF Treaty signed at the U.S.-Soviet summit in December 1987. Although memories of the peace movement, mass demonstrations, and the Soviet campaign to prevent Euromissile deployment have faded, the divisive debates of the early 1980s nevertheless continue to cast a shadow over current debates on European security. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the FRG, where the peace movement was the largest and where the Euromissile conflict led to the collapse of a security consensus that had been a hallmark of West German politics since the early 1960s.

At first glance, an uneasy calm appears to have descended upon the West German political landscape in the wake of the INF Treaty, with all major political parties backing a budding U.S.-Soviet détente and calling for further progress in arms control talks. A look below the surface, however, rapidly reveals serious fault lines within the West German political elite over the future of nuclear weapons on German soil. Despite the positive benefits of the INF Treaty, it has nevertheless made future decisions about nuclear modernization politically more difficult in the FRG. West German conservatives who have traditionally backed a strong nuclear posture have asked why shorter-range systems need modernization, at considerable domestic cost to them, when militarily more significant longer-range systems were traded away in what many conservatives viewed as a hastily concluded INF Treaty. Meanwhile, on the left, NATO's modernization measures are firmly opposed by the Social Democratic (SPD) opposition, which has increasingly distanced itself from existing alliance nuclear doctrine since its fall from power in 1982. Having greeted the INF Treaty as a positive step toward a denuclearized Europe, the SPD has now embraced calls for a third and fourth zero option and the eventual removal of all nuclear weapons from German soil.

The long-term political ramifications of the Euromissile debate and the INF Treaty in West Germany are often not fully understood outside the FRG. Although the treaty might be seen as having restored the ante of the military status quo, it left in its wake a shattered consensus on NATO nuclear strategy. An early warning note that there was to be no return to the status quo was sounded by an editorial in

the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* after the March 1988 NATO summit in Brussels:

The NATO summit in Brussels was not only a stopover for Reagan on his return trip from Moscow. It was also a watershed, the last meeting of this circle of leaders with the man with whom they implemented and subsequently rescinded the INF decision. He who believes that both actions cancel each other out is mistaken. The removal of intermediate-range missiles may have reestablished the ante of the status quo in military-strategic terms. Politically, however, this is not the case. The difference in the internal constitution of the alliance before and after the INF debate is huge. And this has had political consequences.¹

Of course, pinpointing exactly where and how post-INF West Germany is different—and the ramifications this difference has for the current debate on nuclear modernization—is much more difficult. Perhaps we should start by noting what has not changed. Public opinion research indicates that the peace debate has not dramatically altered the overwhelmingly positive public attitudes of West Germans toward NATO, the U.S. military presence, or the Bundeswehr. The societal commitment to the main institutional pillars of Western defense remain solid and intact. Indeed, although the popularity of Mikhail Gorbachev in West German public opinion polls has been widely noted, the decline of confidence in U.S. leadership and policy registered in public opinion polls in the early 1980s has largely reversed as East-West relations have improved and as U.S.-Soviet arms control talks have produced tangible results.² Despite ongoing speculation about a so-called crisis of acceptability, the FRG is not experiencing a major debate over central issues such as West German membership in NATO.³

Nevertheless, several areas in which important changes have taken place suggest that the FRG is rapidly moving toward a major strategy

¹See Karl Feldmeyer, "Appearance and Reality," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 7, 1988.

²In 1987, for example, the level of trust in former president Ronald Reagan among West Germans rose from 45 to 60 percent. See Hans Rattinger, "The INF Agreement and Public Opinion in West Germany," and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Peace Movements, Parties: Domestic Changes and West German Security Policy—Lessons from the 1980s," papers delivered at the Conference on Canadian and German Perspectives on East-West Arms Control, Toronto, March 10-12, 1988. For a more skeptical view, see Guenther Hardagen, "The Trends Are Changing," *Rheinischer Merkur*, March 31, 1989.

³On the crisis of acceptability issue, see Eckhard Luebke, "Akzeptanzprobleme der NATO-Strategie," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 8/89, February 17, 1989, and Hans Rueschle, "Es gibt keine 'Akzeptanzprobleme' der deutschen Sicherheitspolitik," *Die Welt*, January 12, 1989.

debate.⁴ First, the days when the formulation of security policy was the domain of a small group of experts firmly integrated into a broader NATO community are past. The proliferation of alternative security think tanks and so-called counter experts in West Germany, along with a more attentive public, guarantee that security policy issues will continue to be surrounded by public debate and controversy. Politics remain dominated by domestic issues, especially by the economy. Foreign and security policy issues have nonetheless become more important and more politicized, occupying a role as important as environmental issues in current West German politics. Moreover, the early 1980s amply demonstrated how a small but determined minority could succeed in putting and keeping an issue such as the dual track decision at the heart of national political debate, forcing the government to expend an incredible amount of time and energy defending its policies.⁵

Second, the security elite in the FRG remains divided and polarized, despite the improving East-West climate. Although support for NATO remains strong in principle, the FRG has displayed a growing reticence to bear the heavy material and psychological burden that existing alliance policy imposes on the country in the face of an increasingly uncertain Soviet threat. Nowhere is the gap between an ongoing commitment (in principle) to the alliance and an estrangement from the content of the alliance's actual policies more apparent than in the nuclear arena.

A wide and disparate set of factors has contributed to growing antinuclear sentiment and a resulting estrangement from NATO nuclear policy in the 1980s. The list starts with the loose talk in the early 1980s about the possibility of limited nuclear war in Europe. This talk, reinforced by a massive Soviet propaganda campaign, led to a war scare that swept across central Europe in the early 1980s. Other factors on the list include former president Ronald Reagan's initial justification for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and his criticism of the morality of nuclear deterrence, the shock wave of Chernobyl, and Gorbachev's call for a nuclear-free world. The list ends with several well-publicized scandals in the West German civilian nuclear industry. The result has been a steady decline in public support for the civilian

⁴See Ronald D. Asmus, "West German NATO Policy: The Next Five Years," The RAND Corporation, N-2953-AF, November 1989.

⁵For a good history on the origins of the security debate in the early 1980s, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Die Krise der Sicherheitspolitik*, Matthias-Gruenewald Verlag, Mainz, 1988.

use of nuclear energy, as well as a growing alienation from anything even remotely associated with nuclear war-fighting capabilities.⁶

Such changes in public consciousness have been matched by important shifts in elite attitudes—shifts that have been intertwined with and buttressed by the strains witnessed during the past decade in U.S.-West German ties and linked to significant oscillations in U.S. nuclear arms control policy. In the early 1980s, the downturn in U.S.-Soviet relations and the skeptical and negative attitude initially adopted by the Reagan administration toward nuclear arms control quickly led to a deep estrangement between Washington and the West German Social Democratic party. In the 1970s, leading Social Democrats had already increasingly distanced themselves from concepts of nuclear deterrence, first use, and deliberate escalation, claiming that pursuing a long-term strategy of political détente was impossible while maintaining a security policy and military structure that the East would inevitably see as threatening.

Western observers were slow to note such trends in the SPD, in large part because of the dominant role Helmut Schmidt still played in setting official Social Democratic policy. Schmidt's thinking, still rooted in traditional concepts of deterrence and balance, was what led the former chancellor to make his famous speech in 1977 in London that set into motion the train of events leading to the NATO dual track decision of 1979.⁷ In any case, Schmidt was faced with significant opposition from the outset and managed to keep his own party in line only by threatening to resign on several occasions. The degree to which the SPD had distanced itself from Schmidt on this issue was

⁶As West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl acknowledged in an interview in December, "In no other country is the psychological reaction to important events as dramatic as in ours. The reaction to Chernobyl was nowhere near as emotional elsewhere as in our country" (*Die Welt*, December 7, 1986). Polls taken in early 1986, for example, showed that three-fourths of all West Germans believed that a Chernobyl-like accident could happen in the FRG and that clear majorities oppose nuclear energy; even the voters of the traditionally pronuclear Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) were evenly split in favor and against the civilian use of nuclear power (*Reuters*, January 28, 1986). In the summer of 1986, a mere 23 percent of all West Germans believed that denuclearization increased the likelihood of war. For a good discussion of the impact of such trends on the Bundeswehr, see Gottfried Linn, "Has Peace Finally Arrived—Acceptance Problems Concerning the Objectives and Content of Security Policy among the Population," *Truppenpraxis*, January/February 1989, pp. 11-16.

⁷For a discussion of Schmidt's motives, see Joffe, *The Limited Partnership*, pp. 72-73, and the chapter on the Schmidt era in Helga Haftendorn, *Sicherheit und Stabilität; Aussenbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik zwischen Oelkrise und NATO-Doppelbeschluss*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, GmbH and Co. KG, Munich, July 1986, pp. 92-132. For Schmidt's own views on strategy and deterrence, see *Strategie des Gleichgewichts*, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1969, and his *Menschen und Mächte*, Siedler Verlag, West Berlin, 1967.

demonstrated in the fall of 1984 at the SPD's Cologne congress, where the former chancellor found himself alone on the Euromissile issue.

As East-West relations deteriorated in the early 1980s, and as Washington was increasingly perceived in West Germany as downplaying the arms control component of the dual track decision in favor of the modernization track, the West German SPD found itself in opposition to the Reagan administration, whose policies it perceived—rightly or wrongly—as aggressive, unpredictable, and contrary to vital German interests. A sense of political frustration and impotence merged with rising antinuclear sentiment, producing a political backlash that took on a national antinuclear tone. The alliance, accused the SPD's security expert Egon Bahr, contained "nuclear class differences," with Bonn suffering from discrimination because its nuclear destiny was in the hands of a country over which it had little or no control.⁸ This factor explained the revised role Social Democrats envisioned for nuclear weapons and the emphasis they placed on "European self-assertion" in their blueprints for a "second Ostpolitik"—one that emphasized greater West German autonomy and the search for alternatives to nuclear deterrence in the guise of "common security" and "structurally nonoffensive defensive capabilities."⁹

A similar process subsequently took place on the German right in the wake of Reykjavik and the double zero option solution for INF. The German right, confronted both with shifts in U.S. nuclear arms control policy it perceived as precipitous and contrary to its definition of German interests (above all, on the second zero) and with the way in which the government under West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had been pressured to agree to abandon the Pershing IA, criticized U.S. leadership, warning of the potential dangers of superpower collusion and a possible "sellout" of German national interests. Whereas the SPD had wrapped itself in the banner of European "self-assertion" in the early 1980s as a counterweight to the Reagan administration, now West German conservatives raised the banner of European (above all, Franco-German) cooperation, to slow down what they saw as a precipitous rush to reach nuclear accommodation with Moscow.

The skepticism and concern of leading Christian Democrats over the INF Treaty must be seen against the broader background of their own views on extended deterrence. For some three decades, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) was the most

⁸See Egon Bahr, "Atomare Klassenunterschiede," *Der Spiegel*, February 13, 1984, and the response by Karl Kaiser, "National im anti-nuklearen Gewande," *Die Zeit*, March 31, 1984.

⁹For further details, see Ronald D. Asmus, "The SPD's Second Ostpolitik," *Aussenpolitik*, No. 1, 1987, pp. 40-55.

open advocate of nuclear deterrence and the political force most concerned about keeping the FRG firmly coupled to the United States through extended deterrence. Thus, leading Christian Democrats initially (in the late 1970s and early 1980s) called for unconditional deployment of long-range INF systems. When they took over the reins of power in Bonn in 1982, however, the CDU/CSU was compelled to adopt a much more forthcoming stance on the arms control component of the dual track decision. Not only was arms control the basis for a coalition with Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's Free Democrats, but Union leaders also saw arms control, in the words of one official at the time, as the "key to de-emotionalizing" the nuclear issue and the widening INF debate.¹⁰ A latent tension remained, however, between the Union's belief in the need for bolstering the credibility of extended deterrence and its calls for arms control to make deterrence more palatable through arms control.¹¹

Developments in U.S.-Soviet relations would not allow the Christian Democrats to substitute slogans for policy indefinitely. Union leaders had never been comfortable with the zero option proposal in light of their belief in the need for LRINF as a coupling mechanism, even in the absence of the SS-20. When they assumed power in the fall of 1982, however, the double zero had already become official alliance policy, and the CDU/CSU, too, quickly found justifying INF deployments easy by pointing to the SS-20—especially since Moscow seemed unlikely ever to accept such an offer.¹²

When the zero option took on new life in early 1986, Christian Democrats quickly found themselves faced with an emerging dilemma. Several leading Christian Democrats attempted to attach preconditions to the emerging zero option, modifying the alliance position to leave some residual intermediate-range forces. Most important, some Christian Democrats strongly opposed the so-called second zero of the double zero proposal for both military and political reasons. They not only feared the decoupling effect, but also foresaw that the arms control debate's focus would inevitably shift to the SNF realm, where any modernization would become more difficult in political terms. But the party quickly found itself isolated, with its equal ceilings concept rejected not only in Washington but in Paris and London as well. Despite some concerns in all three capitals over the rapid pace in arms

¹⁰*New York Times*, March 18, 1983.

¹¹Clay Clemens, "Beyond INF: West Germany's Centre-Right Party and Arms Control in the 1980s," *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, Winter 1989/1990, pp. 55-74.

¹²West German Defense Minister Manfred Woerner publicly claimed that he would crawl on his hands and knees to Moscow if the Soviets would accept the double zero option.

control negotiations, the cost of trying to attach preconditions was seen as prohibitive. Moreover, few government officials believed that West German conservatives would be able to enlist the support of Foreign Minister Genscher, who had quickly staked out a public position endorsing every step in the unfolding U.S.-Soviet talks and urging Bonn not to become an impediment in this process. In addition, few believed that the Bonn government would be able to sustain such a position in light of public opinion trends in West Germany.

Confronted with a string of domestic losses in state elections, Christian Democratic leaders concerned about the party's domestic standing now expressed deep concern over the prospect of being labeled the "missile party." Isolated abroad and under growing pressure domestically, Kohl retreated from his initial opposition to the double zero in June 1987, stipulating only that the German Pershing IA missiles with U.S.-owned warheads be excluded from the accord.¹³ Even this price proved too high, however, and two months later Kohl pledged that Bonn would scrap the Pershing IA after the removal of U.S. and Soviet INF systems.¹⁴

Although many of the Union's problems resulted from the contradictions inherent in the CDU/CSU's own policies—especially from its attempts to straddle the fence on the need to bolster deterrence and simultaneously pursue arms control—many Union leaders subsequently complained bitterly over what they felt was U.S. insensitivity to German interests. Many West German conservatives had seriously underestimated U.S. interest in the double zero option solution, believing it was largely a Republican election strategy ploy to protect Reagan's foreign policy flank. Thus, they were all the more shocked by the Reykjavik summit, which came as the ultimate blow to their confidence in U.S. prudence and staying power in nuclear policy—especially since it was followed by what was perceived by West German conservatives as U.S. pressure tactics to have Bonn agree to the second zero and the elimination of the Pershing IA. Leading West German conservatives' fears that the double zero agreement was decoupling—and that it produced a situation in which the FRG remained vulnerable to a massive Soviet superiority in short-range systems and in which any future modernization of nuclear weapons on German soil would be politically more

¹³Though not anxious to modernize these missiles, some elements in the Union—above all, in the CSU—hoped that the right to retain them would provide additional bargaining leverage in later talks on short-range systems and conventional forces.

¹⁴With his own cabinet and party badly divided, Kohl had to resort to his prerogative as chancellor to make the decision. His decision led Franz Josef Strauss, Bavarian prime minister and chairman of the CSU, and the CSU to publish a party statement claiming that the very basis for West German membership in NATO had been jeopardized. See the statement published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 13, 1987.

difficult in the wake of INF—were subsequently exacerbated by the impact of an Office of the Secretary of Defense— (OSD-)sponsored report on discriminate deterrence. The emotional and critical response this report evoked, especially among West German conservatives, can only be explained against this background of diminished faith in U.S. leadership. The report confirmed the suspicion that trends in U.S. strategic thinking and arms control policy were undercutting risk sharing within the alliance.¹⁵

In many ways, this situation paralleled the German left's alienation in the early 1980s from U.S. nuclear strategy. Karl Lamers, disarmament spokesman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, described the impact of changes in U.S. nuclear diplomacy upon conservative attitudes toward the United States:

The question whether one can guarantee one's own security, or whether one is dependent upon others on such an important existential issue, is crucial for the dignity and self-confidence of any society. This became clear in 1983, above all on the left, in connection with the debate over the deployment of new intermediate-range missiles. Perhaps here [that is, on the right], attitudes toward the United States have also started to change in the meantime because one now thinks that the Americans want to disarm. A certain sobriety has set in on my part of the political spectrum in terms of the interests of the United States. There was always an anti-nuclear current in the United States. Take Reagan's speech from 1983 on SDI, in which he declared deterrence to be morally reprehensible. That had, albeit with some delay, an effect in Europe and in the CDU/CSU. In addition, we have the increasing tendency in the U.S.A. to want to withdraw troops from Europe and the Federal Republic. The new Soviet proposals in foreign and arms control policy also play a role. These proposals are aimed primarily at the nuclear sphere and at the American presence in Europe.¹⁶

As a result, pressures for cutting back on nuclear weapons have been generated not only on the left, but also on the right.¹⁷ Of course, this

¹⁵See Fred C. Iklé and Albert Wohlstetter (eds.), *Discriminate Deterrence, Report of the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1986.

¹⁶*Tageszeitung*, November 10, 1987.

¹⁷According to Karsten Voigt, foreign affairs spokesman for the SPD in the Bundestag, "Today it is the right that is afraid of limited nuclear war in Europe after the INF Treaty removed intermediate-range missiles, the same way that the peace movement feared it [that is, limited nuclear war] when the missiles were being deployed. The peace movement thought deployment coupled the alliance too tightly; the right fears arms control will decouple West Germany. These are psychological dimensions, anxieties that are undermining the rationality of the security debate. The result is that both the right wing and the left wing in West Germany are pressing in the direction of nuclear disarmament." (*International Herald Tribune*, February 29, 1988.)

message was behind the so-called singularization debate. West German officials have maintained that the FRG is not singularized solely because of its exposure to a massive superiority in Soviet short-range nuclear systems, but also because of the potential political consequences of the remaining Western systems on West German soil. By lending credibility to the arguments of those who claim the United States wants to wage nuclear war in Europe, West German officials argue, the singularization debate will ultimately generate increased pressure for a third zero option and the eventual denuclearization of Europe. In the words of Volker Ruehe, deputy chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group and one of the main proponents of the "singularization" thesis, "It is no longer possible to ignore the political fact that deterrence is being criticized in the FRG not only by the left but by the right and by people who have traditionally been in favor of the strategy of nuclear deterrence and because of the structures that will be left in place by the INF Treaty."¹⁸

Although such trends predate Gorbachev's arrival, the arms control proposals initiated under the Soviet leader's aegis and the perceptions of reduced Soviet threat have clearly both fueled existing antinuclear sentiments and reinforced the existing fault lines within the German security elite. Public opinion polling in the FRG has documented a consistent decline in threat perceptions since the mid-1980s, coinciding with Gorbachev's arms control initiatives. Coupled with growing antinuclear sentiment, this changed perception has produced high rates of public support rejecting nuclear modernization and supporting calls for the removal of all nuclear weapons. Polls taken in early 1988, for example, showed that some 68 percent of all West Germans rejected nuclear modernization, with 79 percent calling for the removal of all nuclear weapons from West German soil. When asked whether an FRG without nuclear weapons would be any more vulnerable to Soviet pressure, a clear majority—57 percent—of West Germans responded

¹⁸*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, January 21, 1988. According to Ruehe, "One should not underestimate the political consequences the remaining potential in Western Europe could have. . . . The formula 'the shorter the range, the more German the effect' does not only apply to the remaining short-range Soviet systems. . . . It is much more a question of the potential political consequences NATO's remaining nuclear weapons could have for the FRG. This is a nuclear posture that, if its current structure and scope remain unchanged, would include only land-based systems that would only destroy German territory if they were to be used—German territory in the German Democratic Republic and in the Federal Republic of Germany." ("Perspektiven zur Friedenssicherung in Europa," *Europa Archiv*, No. 23, 1987, p. 678.) Several Western officials, most notably U.S. Ambassador Richard Burt, have termed the notion of singularization a "myth," pointing out that other NATO countries are exposed to a similar threat from Soviet forces. See Burt's article in *Der Spiegel*, February 22, 1988.

no.¹⁹ Queried shortly before the Brussels NATO summit in May 1989, an overwhelming 89 percent of West Germans opposed SNF modernization.²⁰

Although Gorbachev has clearly had a dramatic impact upon perceptions of the USSR throughout the Western world, perhaps nowhere has the Soviet leader's impact upon both public and elite opinion been greater than in the FRG.²¹ Indeed, the Soviet leader has captured the imagination of West Germans in a fashion not seen since the days of former U.S. president John F. Kennedy.²²

The reasons for Gorbachev's popularity are essentially twofold. First, West Germans see the Soviet leader's proclaimed "new thinking" in foreign policy and his calls for the construction of a "common European home" as corresponding to many aims Bonn itself has pursued through its own Ostpolitik—namely, the demilitarization of the East-West conflict and the development of a new and expanded system of European security. Second, they see Gorbachev's internal reforms in the USSR as paralleling the type of internal changes in the East that the architects of West German Ostpolitik always hoped to nurture with their own initiatives. West Germans have always seen such external and internal changes in Soviet behavior as basic prerequisites for the creation of what former West German chancellor Willy Brandt once termed a "European peace structure."

At first glance, West German reactions to Gorbachev appear to be a unanimous chorus of approval. A closer look at the West German political landscape, however, reveals some important differences among the major political actors—differences that have played a role in the SNF issue and that we will discuss later.²³ The important point,

¹⁹Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "When the Feeling of Threat Dwindles: Defense Policy Faced with the Growing Problem of Acceptability," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 22, 1988.

²⁰*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 16, 1989.

²¹Note that Gorbachev has struck a responsive chord in the U.S. public as well. Queried in July 1988, some 80 percent of all Americans expressed a favorable impression of the Soviet leader. On U.S. attitudes, see Daniel Yankelovich and Richard Smoke, "American 'New Thinking,'" *Foreign Affairs*, September 1988, pp. 1-17, and *The Public, the Soviets, and Nuclear Arms*, The Public Agenda Foundation and the Brown University Center for Foreign Policy Development, New York and Providence, R.I., 1988.

²²The Kennedy analogy has been made by several West German commentators and is based on the assumption that at least part of Kennedy's popularity was that he offered a sense of vision and hope that East-West relations could improve after the Berlin Wall. Likewise, Gorbachev may be popular because he has offered a vision and stimulated hopes that East-West confrontation in the heart of Europe will eventually be an impossibility.

²³For further details, see Ronald D. Asmus, "Bonn's Ostpolitik in the Age of Gorbachev," in James A. Cooney, Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, and Gerald R. Kleinfeld (eds.), *German-American Relations Yearbook 1*, Campus Verlag, New York and Frankfurt, 1989, pp. 79-94.

however, is that such factors have combined to strengthen the impression that the Germans are the ones who potentially have the most to gain from changes in Soviet foreign policy. This, in turn, has created both an important political imperative for any West German leader and the need to explore fully the possibilities offered by Gorbachev for fear of otherwise having missed a unique historical opportunity.

Finally, the debate over the future of nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy in West Germany has acquired yet another dimension as it has become intertwined with the issue of national sovereignty and a new self-assertiveness in the FRG. The often-discussed "successor generation" is slowly making its impact felt in the political debates in Bonn. It is a generation that has inherited NATO; that some 40 years after World War II its members are reexamining the security arrangements entered into by their fathers to see whether they are still ideally suited to German interests is hardly surprising.²⁴ It is also a generation that increasingly recognizes that the FRG is not a fully sovereign country. Two harrowing accidents at Ramstein Air Base on August 28, 1988, and in the town of Ramscheid on December 8, 1988, together with the implications of the Libyan affair, have only focused attention on what experts have known all along—namely, that the FRG does not have full sovereign control over its air space or air waves.²⁵

The sovereignty debate, as it has been dubbed, is unlikely to disappear and is likely to politicize and emotionalize the security debate further. The antinuclear and anti-INF debate of the early 1980s already demonstrated strong nationalist overtones. Although initially limited to the left, these overtones rapidly spread to the right after the zero option INF agreement. The SNF debate, as we shall see, also rapidly developed a nationalist tinge. Opponents of SNF modernization argued that such weapons were militarily unnecessary and that modernization was being pushed by the alliance's nuclear powers, especially by the United States and the United Kingdom, for essentially political reasons—namely, to maintain a position of control over and ensure the dependence of the nonnuclear powers in the alliance, including the FRG. Speaking at the height of the SNF controversy, the FRG's eloquent president, Richard von Weizsaecker, seemed to put his finger on this new sense of national pride and self-assertion in a speech about the country's 40th anniversary. He insisted that Bonn did not

²⁴See Stephen Szabo (ed.), *The Successor Generation: International Perspectives of Postwar Europeans*, Butterworth, Boston, 1983.

²⁵We hasten to add that existing limits on West German sovereignty are a carryover from the early postwar period and were originally part of a conscious decision on Bonn's part. They were designed to underline the point that the FRG was a provisorium and that the "German question" was still open.

aspire to being a great power, but that its neighbors should also not view it as a "play ball" in their own diplomatic calculations.²⁶

The cumulative effect of such trends has only been to strengthen convictions that the current status quo in nuclear systems stationed in the FRG is neither desirable nor tenable, that pressures for further reductions will likely increase rather than decrease, and that Bonn must act to control this process and steer it in a direction that better corresponds to German military and political interests. "The most important task at this stage," according to Karl Kaiser, director of the Foreign Policy Association, "is to define the bottom line of nuclear deterrence, to come to an alliance agreement on what the minimum is, rather than leave the definition to an uncontrollable process in which the internal politics of the alliance interact with Soviet initiatives."²⁷

²⁶See von Weizsaecker's speech in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 26, 1989.

²⁷*New York Times*, December 20, 1987.

III. THE ORIGINS OF THE SNF DISPUTE

Against the backdrop we have sketched, Bonn's initial call for a "comprehensive concept," officially embraced in the NATO foreign ministers' communiqué issued in Reykjavik in June 1987, appeared almost a cry for conceptual and allied assistance. This assistance was needed to help sort out the political and military consequences of the INF Treaty, the sudden reversal from several years of superpower confrontation to a rapidly budding U.S.-Soviet détente, and the domestic fallout from the entire INF debate and its impact upon elite and societal attitudes toward nuclear weapons, now reinforced by perceptions of diminishing threat.¹

At first the call went largely unheeded, for several reasons. In the United States, the Reagan administration was understandably preoccupied with nailing down the final details and meeting numerous deadlines necessary to complete the preparations for the INF Treaty and a Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Washington in December 1987. Moreover, the Reagan administration was rapidly becoming a lame-duck administration, its ability to shape a new consensus in the alliance on nuclear deterrence severely circumscribed.² By 1988, the United States was plunged into an election year, thereby placing any decisions about future U.S. policy toward European security and arms control issues on the back burner.

Finally, much confusion remained in Washington about what exactly West German wishes were. Having been told for several years that the emotional INF debate had threatened to destroy the consensus on security policy in the FRG, and that trying to reach an arms control agreement with the USSR on this issue as soon as possible was politically imperative, Washington now found itself confronted with a number of influential voices seemingly criticizing the United States for having concluded precisely such a treaty. The latter only reinforced the impression in some circles that the West Germans were confused and prone to criticize any U.S. policy regardless of its content.

¹For the official communiqué from the NATO foreign ministers' meeting of June 12, 1987, see *Europa Archiv*, No. 14, July 1987, pp. D382-D384.

²Indeed, by the Reagan administration's end, many traditional West European supporters of deterrence were inclined to see Reagan's policies, his justification of SDI, and his criticism of nuclear deterrence as immoral; his proposals at Reykjavik were seen as part of the problem, not the solution.

In reality, of course, different Germans had very different opinions. Poorly understood outside West Germany, such differences increasingly became a key factor in the SNF modernization saga. At first glance, the West Germans seemed increasingly united and vocal following the INF Treaty in opposing such notions as the erection of a so-called fire-break in the SNF range. Indeed, calls for drastic cuts among SNF systems emerged from such diverse political figures as Egon Bahr and Alfred Dregger, CDU/CSU parliamentary floor leader. On the left, the SPD has long favored such reductions in the context of creating a nuclear-free corridor; after the INF Treaty, Social Democrats called for a third zero option for nuclear systems with a range below 500 kilometers.³

On the right, several leading foreign policy figures among the Christian Democrats—above all, Volker Ruehe—also embraced the call for significant reductions in short-range systems, including a “drastic” reduction of some 50 to 80 percent in nuclear artillery.⁴ Speaking in Washington in May 1988, Alfred Dregger referred to the arguments of the authors of the discriminate deterrence report and claimed that Germans too could not be expected to base their security on a policy that, if implemented, implied self-annihilation.⁵ Such arguments have also received support from foreign ministry officials and from Genscher himself, who has publicly argued that short-range nuclear systems are the least important for maintaining nuclear deterrence, thus implying that modernizing them was not essential.⁶

This apparent chorus of antinuclear voices, however, only covered up important differences in the motivations of the major political actors involved—differences we will discuss in some depth in the next section and that are especially important for understanding the future

³See the interview with Egon Bahr from January 1988, in which he claims that a new consensus has emerged on an anti-SNF platform (*Der Spiegel*, No. 4, January 25, 1988, pp. 52–61).

⁴See Ruehe's comments in *Die Welt*, March 15, 1988, and his interview in *Die Zeit*, February 15, 1988.

⁵Dregger said: “We Germans also want the alliance's comprehensive concept to consider whether the current levels of nuclear artillery are necessary and expedient. If our allies say these weapons are needed in order to protect their forces, then I must point out that the protection of the civilian population is just as important—at least to us—as the protection of allied and our own forces. The fighting spirit of the federal armed forces does not depend solely on its equipment, but even more on the conviction of our servicemen that NATO's strategy is necessary to ensure the survival of the German people. We must seriously doubt the value of such protection . . . if their own leaders were to expose them to the effects of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Chernobyl gave us an idea of what this would mean in reality.” See Dregger's speech delivered in Washington on May 5, 1988 (author's private copy).

⁶See Genscher's comments in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 8, 1988.

evolution of West German attitudes on these issues. Suffice it to say here that on the left, such calls were part and parcel of broader calls for a full-scale revamping of existing NATO nuclear and conventional strategy, including a major redefinition of flexible response and the shift to a minimal nuclear deterrent. For the long run, Social Democrats embraced the goal of the eventual denuclearization of West Germany and a reliance upon other allied (as well as U.S.) strategic forces.⁷

In contrast, on the right, Christian Democrats saw such cuts as a preemptive move to defuse growing political pressures that were eroding nuclear deterrence's political acceptability. In short, whereas the SPD saw such cuts as an opportunity to push for changes in alliance nuclear strategy, Christian Democrats saw them as necessary to save it. Not only did West German conservatives remain committed to flexible response, CDU leaders also presented such reductions as part of a package deal. Several leading conservative politicians—above all, Volker Ruehe—called for such an approach deal to loosen the Gordian knot of nuclear modernization.⁸

This package deal would involve significant reductions in short-range nuclear systems, especially in nuclear artillery; such a move would be coupled with a "restructuring" of the remaining systems that would extend their range significantly, thereby enhancing their political acceptability by reversing the trend toward German singularity. Wherever possible, deployments would be spread across the alliance in order to respread nuclear risk sharing. Restructuring, according to Ruehe, "means that we will keep our strategy both acceptable and effective with fewer weapons but with a more convincing structure." In subsequent interviews, the CDU politician stated that such a restructuring could allow the alliance to cut its theater nuclear force by another third.⁹ The same principle was embraced by Manfred Woerner shortly before he stepped down as West German minister of defense:

Europe's security remains linked to the existence of a minimal number of these weapons and the maintenance of the ability to escalate at all levels, up to and including the strategic level.

It is a question of restructuring our nuclear potential in conjunction with the comprehensive concept. . . . It is not a question of compensation for the land-based or cruise missiles currently being withdrawn, and even some form of trying to get around [the provisions

⁷See Asmus, "The SPD's Second Ostpolitik."

⁸See Ruehe, "Perspektiven zur Friedensaicherungs in Europa."

⁹See Ruehe's interviews in *Die Welt*, March 15, 1968, and his interview in *Die Zeit*, February 15, 1968.

of] the INF Treaty... The German interest is leaning toward a further reduction of shorter-range systems, above all battlefield weapons, in favor of those weapons which can carry the risk of a potential attacker back to his own territory.¹⁰

Such voices found very little resonance in an alliance still congratulating itself on the INF Treaty and in a Washington where foreign policy was essentially put on cruise control while everyone awaited the outcome of the U.S. election campaign. Existing differences were largely papered over at the session of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in April 1988 and the NATO Defense Committee meeting the following month; little attempt was made to underline the urgency of a coordinated policy approach to defuse a potentially divisive issue.¹¹ Anyone sitting down and comparing the electoral calendars in the United States and in the FRG, where national elections will occur in late 1990, could see that the alliance would have a relatively narrow window of opportunity—several months—in which it would have to come to grips with this issue. That window would open in January 1989 with the inauguration of the U.S. president and the completion of a NATO study on the alliance's post-INF nuclear requirements. It would close with the planned summit to celebrate NATO's 40th anniversary in May 1989.¹²

The alliance's ability to use that window effectively was to be further hampered, however. First, in the United States, the administration of president-elect George Bush was slow to get in place several key players in the foreign and defense policy realm. Second, the administration's first order of business was completing several broad policy reviews initiated by the president on U.S. policy toward the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe. Third, in light of the flux in German politics, the administration had to make tough judgment calls on two key issues with longer-term implications very quickly. The first issue was the military significance of retaining land-based systems in West Germany as part of NATO's nuclear posture. The second was a political assessment of the political forces that could be mobilized in favor of supporting, or at least retaining, that option. Such moves also had to be made rather quickly and at a time when the hiatus in U.S. leadership during the final months of the Reagan administration, coupled with Gorbachev's own initiatives (above all, with his December 1988 United Nations speech), had led to

¹⁰See Woerner's speech, reprinted in *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik*, No. 4, 1988.

¹¹See the communiqués from these meetings in *Europa Archiv*, No. 15, August 10, 1988.

¹²See Ronald D. Asmus, "West Germany Faces Nuclear Modernization," *Survival*, November/December 1988, pp. 499-514.

a situation in which German politics were increasingly being driven by Soviet, not U.S., policy.

Last but certainly not least, the SNF debate must be seen against the backdrop of long-standing differences in the alliance over such basic questions as the nature of deterrence, interpretations of flexible response, and the types and quantities of weapons necessary for a credible nuclear deterrent. Although a full explanation of such differences is beyond this study's scope, to step back first and briefly lay out some of these differences before turning to details of the actual dispute over SNF modernization that unfolded in the early months of 1989 might nevertheless be useful.

Perhaps we should start by noting that differences have always existed among Western strategic thinkers about the very nature of nuclear deterrence. Some have argued that the mere existence of a nuclear capability provides a form of existential deterrence; others distinguish between "general" and "immediate" deterrence. General deterrence suggests that merely conveying a sense of risk to a potential adversary is sufficient to ensure that aggression is never contemplated. NATO's own strategy is much closer to that of immediate deterrence and involves planning for an active effort to deter in the course of a crisis; hence, it emphasizes the militarily effective use of theater nuclear weapons. NATO has generally accepted the traditional U.S. view that militarily effective use is necessary to send a credible political signal both for initial and subsequent nuclear use.¹³

NATO's current nuclear strategy of flexible response appears in alliance documents such as MC 14/3. The overall parameters for this strategy are quite simple and take the form of a three-tiered graduated response that includes direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response. The clarification of the guidelines for the use of nuclear weapons appears in *General Political Guidelines for the Employment of Nuclear Weapons in the Defense of NATO*, the most recent update of which was completed in 1986.

Flexible response has, however, always been flexible enough as a doctrine to accommodate different national views on doctrine and strategy. West German policymakers, for example, initially resisted flexible response because they were opposed to strategies that raised the prospect of protracted conventional war on German soil. Although the United States and West Germany eventually submerged their differences in MC 14/3, both sides continue to have their own national

¹³See Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981, and "I Exist, Therefore I Deter," *International Security*, Summer 1988, pp. 177-196.

interpretations of what "agreed" NATO strategy really is. U.S. military planners have sought to bend flexible response in the direction of extended conventional warfare, whereas German defense officials stressed that nuclear use could come any time after the outbreak of fighting.

West German attitudes toward flexible response have also been shaped by the obvious fact that German policymakers are equally unenthusiastic about the prospect of a protracted nuclear conflict in the theater, especially on German soil. Although they accept the deployment of U.S. nuclear forces on European soil, German officials have always argued that the use of these forces should be political and demonstrative, designed to signal NATO's seriousness and its willingness to escalate, not to fight a prolonged and limited nuclear war. From a German perspective, the real deterrent against a Soviet attack has always been the threat of escalation to a strategic nuclear response, with theater nuclear forces serving as a tripwire. For many U.S. policymakers, however, the objective of flexible response was to increase the credibility of deterrence by assuring that a Soviet conventional or tactical nuclear attack on the central front would not have to be answered by the threat of escalation to a strategic nuclear exchange.¹⁴

In short, the issues of when, how, and with what to cross the nuclear threshold have been disputed in the alliance for some 20 years. Nonetheless, movement toward a more effective compromise in internal NATO circles has occurred. The General Political Guidelines (GPG) of 1986, for example, represent the first fully integrated NATO document to set guidelines for first use, follow-on use, and general nuclear response at sea and at land. The guidelines also strike a new balance between past differences by adopting a more sophisticated view between the military effectiveness of nuclear use and the intention to send a signal of political resolve. Although the alliance has come to accept the traditional U.S. view that militarily effective nuclear use enhances the prospect that the "signal" will have its desired effect, the GPG also apparently stress that the signal of initial use would be enhanced by striking targets in depth, including in the Soviet Union.¹⁵

This trend in official NATO thinking, however, has also been flanked by another trend in the ongoing nuclear debate—namely, a growing number of policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic, including several former senior U.S. government officials, who reject NATO's

¹⁴For background on such differences, see Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, and John VanOudenaren, *West German Policymaking and NATO Nuclear Strategy*, The RAND Corporation, R-3198-AF, September 1985.

¹⁵For further details, see Ivo H. Daalder, "NATO Nuclear Targeting and the INF Treaty," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, No. 3, September 1988, pp. 265-291.

strategy of first use as a bluff. They advocate instituting an explicit no-first-use policy and reducing nuclear weapons' role to that of simply deterring adversary's use of such weapons.¹⁶ The arguments marshaled by the leading figures in this debate have in many ways been distinct from the critical positions concerning NATO nuclear strategy adopted in parts of the European left and the peace movement. However, the calling into question of official NATO strategy by former high-ranking officials responsible for nuclear strategy has clearly further eroded support for flexible response—above all, for deliberate escalation. Coming in the wake of a polarizing INF debate, growing antinuclear sentiment, the prospect of significant progress in arms control negotiations, and the amelioration of the conventional balance, such arguments have given a powerful impetus to policymakers who claimed that NATO strategy was no longer viable in either political or military terms. Although the advocates of no first use were immediately challenged by traditional West German supporters of NATO, calls for a redefinition of nuclear deterrence clearly have gained considerable support in the FRG, particularly on the German left.¹⁷

Such differences help explain the considerable differences that exist even within official NATO circles concerning the minimum size of the nuclear force necessary to deter an attack by the Warsaw Pact. NATO's official nuclear requirements are computed with a methodology that is primarily a function of the number and types of targets that need to be covered. The latter is, of course, a determination of the amount of damage the alliance must threaten to impose to deter an attack. Targets, both mobile and fixed, are selected for both a potential selective and a general response. Target coverage is, in turn, a function of factors such as survivability, penetrability, accuracy, and reliability—all of which, in turn, are dependent upon the characteristics and the ranges of the weapons systems involved. Of course, the calculations are entirely different for advocates of a more existential and limited form of nuclear deterrence based on no first use. Indeed, the tremendous political attraction of existential deterrence is the suggestion that deterrence arises simply from the presence of nuclear weapons and that it is almost entirely impervious to questions of doctrine, numbers, location, and capabilities. All that is necessary is the

¹⁶McGeorge Bundy et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1982, pp. 753-766.

¹⁷Karl Kaiser et al., "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace—A German Response," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1982, pp. 1157-1170.

availability of some survivable nuclear force and the belief that it could be used in retaliation.¹⁸

In the past decade, NATO has moved to reduce its theater nuclear force substantially. This force has declined and will decline by some 40 percent from approximately 7000 weapons in 1979 to an estimated 4000 by 1991 as a result of the three-tiered reduction process.¹⁹ Such changes, however, have been primarily a function of the improved capabilities of weapons systems, not of a change in the alliance's official understanding of the needs of extended deterrence and flexible response. But every element of the remaining nuclear force needs modernization and programs for all elements are either under way or are under discussion. The systems involved fall into three general categories:

- *Artillery.* This includes artillery-fired atomic projectiles (AFAPs) with a range of some 25 kms. These projectiles are deployed for possible launch from guns of 155-millimeter (-mm) or 203-mm caliber, thousands of which are deployed by NATO. The new shells improve ranges, accuracy, and response time.
- *Missiles.* These include short-range surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs). The Lance is NATO's only short-range land-based SSM, with a range of some 110 kms. The alliance has approximately 88 launchers with some 700 missiles. The follow-on to Lance, which has been at the heart of the SNF debate, would have a range of 400-500 kms. NATO also has some 400 U.S. longer-range sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). British and French SLBMs are not part of NATO's integrated command. One modernization option currently under discussion is the assignment of several U.S. Navy sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) to Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR).²⁰

¹⁸Desmond Ball, "Targeting for Strategic Deterrence," *Adelphi Papers*, No. 185, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1983, and Daalder, "NATO Nuclear Targeting and the INF Treaty."

¹⁹A unilateral reduction of 1000 weapons was part of the initial 1979 dual track decision; a second unilateral reduction of 1400 was agreed to at Montebello in exchange for the modernization of the remaining systems; the third reduction decision was a bilateral part of the INF Treaty and involved the removal of 572 Pershing IIs and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs).

²⁰The option of moving toward a deterrent posture based more heavily on sea- and air-based systems has long had its advocates, especially on the European left. Such steps have traditionally been rejected for both political and military reasons. Politically, no sharing of risk or control would occur. The military constraint is primarily that of communication. The SLCMs option may also be constrained by the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). For further details, see Timothy J. Webb and John Lund, *NATO's Nuclear Modernisation Alternatives*, The RAND Corporation, N-3009-AF, forthcoming.

- *Aircraft.* Dual-capable aircraft (DCA) equipped with gravity bombs are the second most numerous NATO delivery system after artillery. NATO is currently considering two ways of introducing more capable longer-range bombers to the European theater. The first is the forward deployment of FB-111s deployed in the United States to the United Kingdom. Second and more important is the deployment in Western Europe of modern F-15Es; this could begin in the early 1990s. These deployments would increase the size of NATO's long-range nuclear bomber force by nearly 50 percent. More important for NATO in the wake of the INF Treaty and improved Soviet air defenses is the deployment of a standoff missile that could perform both tactical and, if necessary, strategic missions. Deployment of a tactical air-to-surface missile would be a new element in NATO's nuclear arsenal. The prime candidate is the short-range attack missile-tactical (SRAM-T), missiles that would be carried to the point of launch, beyond which the missile could fly as far as 450-500 kms. Several different NATO aircraft—F-111, F-15E, F-16, and the Tornado—could be equipped with TASM's.

Much of the political debate over SNF modernization has thus far focused on the future of short-range land-based nuclear forces and a FOTL. Lance was deployed in 1972 and is now experiencing metal fatigue and problems with corrosion induced by liquid fuel. Although the possibility of extending its life and refurbishing it has been examined, the costs are prohibitive and doing so would mean opening old production lines for parts. Moreover, Lance's limited range, its long reloading time, and its poor accuracy limit its deterrent value. Current estimates are that the system may no longer be nuclear certifiable as of 1995 and that extensions beyond that time are not warranted by price. The army has been hoping to replace Lance for several years and the leading candidate is the army tactical missile system (ATACMS), which will be based on the M270 launcher (better known as the multiple launch rocket system [MLRS]), which would provide for extended range and allow the missile to threaten targets east of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).²¹

Short-range land-based nuclear missiles traditionally have been considered a vital part of the alliance's nuclear posture for both political and military reasons. In political terms, they were seen as the most visible symbol of the United States' nuclear commitment to the FRG's

²¹Webb and Lund, *NATO's Nuclear Modernisation Alternatives*.

defense. Militarily, they were seen as a crucial leg of the theater triad, offering survivability as well as other characteristics not shared by either artillery or aircraft. These characteristics include increased range over artillery and greater target coverage, which provide the link between nuclear artillery and longer-range systems in the ladder of deliberate escalation envisioned in flexible response. They also assure penetration and the ability to respond more rapidly to fluctuating conditions on the battlefield. Again, such considerations are secondary, if not tangential, to advocates of a more limited form of existential deterrence.

For these political and military reasons, the Bush administration concluded early on that maintaining a land-based component in the alliance's nuclear structure was an important goal. Not only was the administration interested in reconfirming its support for maintaining flexible response as NATO nuclear strategy, but short-range land-based missiles were deemed an essential leg in the triad of short-range nuclear forces, with the combination of artillery, aircraft, and missiles necessary to cover the full spectrum of targets specified by the requirements of existing strategy and laid down in the GPG.

Retaining such systems was also seen as desirable for political reasons, however. The first was to underline the ongoing U.S. commitment and to emphasize U.S. opposition to a further step toward denuclearizing Western Europe. Abandoning the Lance, it was feared in Washington, would only further increase pressures for reductions and the probable elimination of nuclear artillery. This would leave the alliance with a deterrent in Europe based largely on DCA. Dual-capable aircraft were considered vulnerable not only militarily, but also politically in light of the mounting pressure to include DCA in future arms control negotiations.

The problem with land-based systems was, of course, dual. The first problem was timing and the fact that Lance was scheduled to be decommissioned in 1995. The timetable for a FOTL deployment in the mid-1990s, in turn, necessitated decisions early on about committing funds for research and development (R&D). Congressional support for such funding, however, was seen as contingent upon Washington having a reasonably firm commitment as to where and when such systems might be deployed.

The second problem was the existing theater balance, or lack thereof (88 Lance launchers versus 1365 FROGs, SCUDs, and SS-21s). Few observers in Washington believed that the Soviets would be interested in the notion of lower but equal ceilings, and nearly everyone expected them to table a proposal for a third zero for land-based missiles. Although the number of Soviet theater weapons is not a major factor

in determining NATO's nuclear force, the alliance had painted itself into a political corner during the INF debate by arguing that NATO deployments were a response to the SS-20 and were necessary because of the resulting asymmetry. Now, however, the alliance was faced with the prospect, if it wanted to avoid a third zero, of reversing its own past argumentation as well as the logic of the INF Treaty and the military rationale of why a 1:13 ratio was better than a third zero.

Finally, few observers thought that the position of "lower but equal ceilings" for short-range land-based missiles would be politically sustainable in the FRG. Both U.S. and other allied officials were increasingly concerned that Moscow would not allow the alliance the luxury of retaining some 50-60 launchers, that it would push for a third zero, and that Bonn would either be unwilling or unable to reject such an offer in light of the political pressures evident in West Germany. As a result, negotiations on SNF were increasingly seen as a dangerous trap and a major step on a slippery slope that would almost inevitably lead to an undesired third zero for short-range land-based missiles.

If the Bush administration quickly concluded that maintaining a land-based component of NATO's short-range nuclear posture was an important goal, its second task—namely, ascertaining the depth of political support that might be mobilized in favor of this position, and with what conditions attached—was far more difficult. Having called for the alliance to adopt a "comprehensive concept," Bonn now found itself unable to deliver a unified West German position on the SNF issue. Already in late 1988, the ruling conservative-liberal coalition had formed a high-level working group consisting of the key political figures from all three coalition parties to deal with the SNF issue.²²

The ruling Bonn coalition agreed on two goals. First, they did not want the FRG denuclearized; second, they believed that negotiations on short-range systems were absolutely necessary for domestic political reasons. Indeed, to West Germans of all political persuasions, for the alliance to conduct negotiation over the entire spectrum of nuclear, conventional, and chemical weapons seemed unacceptable—with the apparent exception of SNF. However, no consensus existed on the equally important question of what the final goal of those negotiations should be and whether, from Bonn's perspective, retaining short-range land-based systems was necessary for either political or military

²²The group included Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), Defense Minister Rupert Scholz (CDU), Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Free Democratic Party [FDP]), FDP party chairman Otto Graf Lambsdorff, and CSU party chairman and minister Theo Waigel. The group's including the chairmen of all three political parties in the coalition was a clear sign of how politicized the SNF issue had already become.

reasons. Better than anyone else, West German politicians knew the political pressures they would face if they agreed to Lance modernization.

In addition, differences within the coalition on precisely this issue were increasingly being aired in public. The new West German defense minister, Rupert Scholz, openly supported the need to retain short-range land-based missiles to maintain the credibility of flexible response; he embraced the notion of a package deal of the type suggested by other CDU politicians such as Ruehe involving reductions and restructuring. Although embracing the need for SNF modernization in principle, Scholz was careful to leave such touchy political questions as timing open.²³ Foreign Minister Genscher, on the other hand, also supported the need to maintain flexible response, but was increasingly seen as opposing Lance modernization. Genscher had initially opposed a zero option for short-range land-based missiles, but the tone of his statements on SNF clearly changed.²⁴ Although not publicly excluding modernization, Genscher increasingly issued warnings against attempts to compensate for the INF Treaty's reductions and the dangers of steps that might torpedo an improving East-West relationship. The West, he insisted, had nothing to fear from arms control; what the alliance needed most was a modernization of its own thinking in response to Gorbachev, not a modernization of weapons. To those familiar with Genscher's style and tactics, it was clear that the foreign minister was using his formidable skills and popularity to push the coalition in the direction of his own view and to create a political fait accompli on the SNF issue.²⁵

Early on in the SNF debate, West German conservatives had quietly expressed the hope that with the chancellor's support, they would succeed in "pinning down" Genscher in favor of modernization. Several factors increasingly worked to increase the weight of Genscher's views and his own personal role, however. The first was the position publicly adopted by the West German foreign minister on the West's response to Gorbachev. Genscher's own popularity seemed to climb with each of the Soviet leader's arms control proposals.

²³See "Zeitpunkt der Modernisierungs-Entscheidung und das Gesamtkonzept sekundär," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 3, 1989.

²⁴Genscher, too, had opposed a zero option for short-range land-based nuclear missiles up through the spring of 1987. In April, after the emergence of calls to draw a line below which no more nuclear reductions would occur under prevailing nuclear conditions, Genscher reversed himself. See *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, April 18, 1987, and Uwe Nehrlich, "SNF Missiles as a Fundamental Problem of Security Policy—The Increasing Constraints on NATO Deployment Options and in West German Bargaining Power," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* working paper, April 1989 (author's copy).

²⁵See, for example, Genscher's interview in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 3, 1989.

Second, Genscher's own political skills and his knowledge of the issues involved also enabled him to outmaneuver many of his more conservative opponents on the SNF issue. The position of Genscher's main counterpart on this issue, Defense Minister Scholz, was increasingly undercut by Scholz's own political trouble; he was rapidly becoming a political liability for the chancellor. A third factor was the increasingly poor performance of the CDU/CSU in state elections, in large part a result of the rise of the new right-wing Republican party. With polls showing the popularity of Kohl and the Christian Democrats sinking and antinuclear sentiments rising, the relative bargaining leverage in the coalition continued to shift in favor of Genscher.

The final, and in many ways crucial, vote in determining Bonn's position was, of course, that of Kohl himself. After Kohl's brief visit to Washington in November to meet with Reagan and president-elect Bush, press reports suggested that Kohl had assured his U.S. hosts that he would be willing to commit himself to a FOTL and TASM if sharp cutbacks or an elimination of NATO's nuclear artillery occurred.²⁶ In an early February interview with the *London Times*, however, Kohl stated that Lance would remain in place until 1995 and that the alliance did not have to reach a decision on whether or not to modernize short-range land-based missiles until 1991 or 1992—that is, after the West German elections. Brushing aside fears that his position might strain relations with other NATO allies, Kohl said: "It doesn't interest me at all if others see this as a sort of litmus test. I have to represent German interests and I am a reliable partner."²⁷ According to Kohl's press spokesman, Friedrich Ost, "In a dynamic process of disarmament we don't need decisions. Instead, we must keep options open."²⁸

Kohl's interview suggested that a consensus was forming in the Bonn coalition in favor of postponing any decision on FOTL until after the German elections. When U.S. Secretary of State James Baker visited Bonn in February, that Bonn was not going to commit itself to a modernization decision was increasingly clear.²⁹ Before the meeting

²⁶See the *Washington Post*, November 16, 1988.

²⁷*Financial Times*, February 10, 1989.

²⁸As quoted in the *Washington Post*, February 10, 1989.

²⁹A West German foreign ministry official quoted Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher as telling Baker, "The momentum which now has been achieved in the disarmament process in Europe, in particular by the unilateral steps taken by Gorbachev, should not be stopped by a false signal [to modernize the Lance] that could be interpreted as rearmament instead of disarmament." (*Washington Post*, February 14, 1989.) However, West German defense ministry sources still claimed that Defense Minister Scholz insisted on keeping the "option" of modernization open (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 20, 1989).

of the Nuclear Planning Group in late April, a compromise was reportedly reached between Washington and Bonn. To accommodate West German sensitivities, Washington backed a formula according to which it agreed not to press Bonn for an immediate decision to modernize Lance, provided Bonn did not ask for speedy negotiations with Moscow on those weapons.³⁰

This uneasy compromise was of very short duration, however. After the CDU's disastrous performance in local elections in West Berlin and the state of Hessen, Kohl was facing what many commentators considered to be his worst crisis since the Christian Democrats had come to power in 1982. On April 21, Kohl announced a long-awaited cabinet reshuffle that included new heads in the critical ministries of defense, finance, and the interior. Kohl also backtracked on several unpopular defense issues, including the rescinding of an extension on the draft. In addition, the coalition adopted a much clearer public position against SNF modernization and in favor of speedy negotiations—a position reportedly reached during an all-night session on April 20. It included five points in which Bonn

- Reconfirmed its commitment to a strategy of deterrence based on a mix of conventional and nuclear forces, including air-, land-, and sea-based systems;
- Claimed that a decision on FOTL was entirely a national U.S. decision;
- Called for the "speedy" start of SNF negotiations, with the goal of lower but equal ceilings;
- Called for negotiations on nuclear artillery, with the goal of drastic reductions;
- Claimed that in 1992 the alliance, taking into consideration the results of arms control negotiations—and, above all, progress in reducing the Warsaw Pact's large-scale offensive operations capability—should decide whether to proceed with the production of a FOTL, which would be deployed no earlier than 1996.³¹

³⁰ See the communiqué from the meeting published in *Bulletin*, No. 37, April 25, 1989.

³¹ The key component of the compromise revolved around the question of a third zero for short-range land-based systems. The compromise embraced the need to maintain air-, land-, and sea-based nuclear systems "under the current circumstances." This implied the rejection of a third zero for short-range land-based systems (a demand voiced by the CDU and especially the CSU) while leaving open the possibility that a third zero might become an option if conditions changed. Questions such as exactly what those conditions would have to be, or within what time frame they would occur, were left largely undefined. See the coalition's position paper published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 24, 1989.

Despite Kohl's efforts to plead for understanding from Bonn's allies, the West German moves clearly raised eyebrows in Washington and elsewhere.³² U.S. officials complained bitterly about what they saw as Bonn reneging on a compromise just reached and in essence "pocketing" a U.S. position not to push the modernization issue. Moreover, by calling for "speedy" negotiations and insisting that a decision on Lance funding was strictly a U.S. national decision, Bonn effectively presented the United States with a political *fait accompli* and placed the ball of further action in the United States' court.³³

Genscher and the new defense minister, Gerhard Stoltenberg, arrived in Washington to explain Bonn's new position only to find an unenthusiastic U.S. response. In a public speech on the day he met with Stoltenberg and Genscher, Defense Minister Richard Cheney again denounced the idea of SNF negotiations.³⁴ Secretary of State Baker, although adopting a conciliatory tone, also made it clear that he too felt SNF negotiations would be a mistake.³⁵

The stage was set for several weeks of last-minute negotiations before the Brussels summit—negotiations that were not without touches of drama. U.S. officials made clear that they were prepared to have an open disagreement at the summit if an adequate compromise could not be reached.³⁶ In the FRG, much of the West German media increasingly

³²Speaking in the Bundestag, the chancellor said: "Everyone will understand why the federal government is adopting this position. On account of the range of short-range systems, the Federal Republic of Germany is more strongly affected than the other members of the alliance. I therefore consider it natural that our friends show the same understanding for our interests as we have shown for their interests on many occasions." See Kohl's speech in *Bulletin*, No. 40, April 28, 1989.

³³According to one administration official, "The Germans have not been straight with us. We had an understanding with them on how to deal with this issue. It was an understanding that was sensitive to their position and to ours. They promised to continue engaging in a discussion to sort out our differences, and then they turned around and presented us with a *fait accompli*. They staked out a public position, without consultations with us. . . . We don't want any dispute with the Germans. We have shown a willingness to be sensitive to their position, but they have not shown a whole lot of sensitivity to ours. It can't just be a one-way street. This is not a way to do business" (*The New York Times*, April 30, 1989).

³⁴"We must not fall into this dangerous trap," Cheney said. "One of the Kremlin's primary goals remains the denuclearization of Europe. Given this goal, and the perilous circumstances that could follow in its train if it's achieved, the alliance must maintain the will to resist the call" (*The New York Times*, April 24, 1989).

³⁵Margaret D. Tutwiler, the State Department spokeswoman, said: "Secretary Baker has said that we think it would be a mistake to engage in arms control negotiations on SNF." One anonymous administration official captured the mood of the time when he said, "What we have here is grandstanding by a panic-stricken government. The Kohl government needed something that would give it the image of being in control on a major issue" (*The New York Times*, April 25, 1989).

³⁶See "Bush Rejects Demand by Bonn on Missiles," *The Washington Post*, May 6, 1989, p. 1.

portrayed the dispute as a test of political will between the nuclear "haves" and "have nots" in the alliance, with Bonn enjoying the support of the continental NATO members versus the "Anglo-Saxons," rather than portraying it as a dispute with voices on both sides in all countries involved.³⁷ A U.S. compromise proposal, according to which the Bush administration reportedly agreed to the principle of talks on short-range weapons but linked the start of such negotiations to the signing and implementation of a conventional reductions agreement and a West German rejection of a third zero for short-range land-based missiles, reportedly led to a coalition crisis. According to West German press reports, Genscher labeled the proposal a "mockery" and spent two days convincing a wavering Chancellor Kohl that it was better "to let the summit end in open dissension than for the Germans to crawl on their knees."³⁸ Other reports suggested that the West German foreign minister also threatened to topple the coalition over the SNF issue.³⁹ In this charged situation President Richard von Weizsaecker, in a major speech on the FRG's 40th anniversary, essentially aligned himself on the side of Genscher and the opponents of modernization when he boldly declared that West Germany, though not aspiring to the role of a great power, had its own national interests and that it would not allow itself to be treated like anyone's "plaything."⁴⁰

The actual compromise on the SNF issue adopted at the Brussels summit straddled the differences of the previous months through an elaborate compromise that met Bonn's insistence on SNF negotiations but with strict conditions attached. The compromise hinged upon a U.S. commitment "to enter into negotiations to achieve a *partial* reduction of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missiles." Bonn, and

³⁷See, for example, the coverage in *Der Spiegel*, No. 18, May 1, 1989. West German officials insisted that Bonn's position was shared within NATO by Italy, Norway, Denmark, Greece, Spain and Belgium. See James M. Markham in the *New York Times*, May 2, 1989. The other key voice was that of France, where President François Mitterrand tried to straddle the issue by rejecting a third zero for land-based nuclear missiles while displaying sympathy for Bonn's desire not to have to make a decision until 1992. At a press conference in Paris, Mitterrand stated: "I am among those who think that the time has not come, far from it, where one could say that a third zero option [is possible]." But, he added, the alliance needed "a time for reflection" to gauge progress in the CFE talks in Vienna and in Soviet steps to reduce its own short-range nuclear arsenal (*The New York Times*, May 18, 1989).

³⁸See the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, May 29, 1989.

³⁹Officials from both the foreign office and the chancellery subsequently denied that Genscher had threatened to resign, noting that in cabinet discussions before the Stoltenberg trip, FDP minister Juergen Moellmann had asked Stoltenberg the rhetorical question of whether he really wanted to go so far in seeking to reach a compromise with Washington that four FDP ministers would find resignation necessary (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 27, 1989).

⁴⁰See von Weizsaecker's speech in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 26, 1989.

Genscher in particular, managed to have what seemed to be a firm rejection of a third zero tempered somewhat through the caveat that the elimination of land-based short-range forces was rejected "under the current conditions"—in short, the same wording at the heart of the internal West German compromise position Genscher had managed to have adopted by Bonn. At the same time, the president was able to gain approval for his own reductions proposals and accommodated Bonn's interests in "speedy" negotiations by proposing to accelerate the timetable for an agreement in Vienna.⁴¹

⁴¹For further details, see "A Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament," *NATO Press Communiqué M-1(89)20*, May 30, 1989.

IV. ALTERNATIVE COALITIONS

How durable will the Brussels compromise on the SNF issue be in future West German politics? At the moment, the Bonn coalition seems to have effectively pushed the issue into the future and beyond the West German election of 1990 by linking any decisions to the outcome of the Vienna conventional forces reductions.

In the long run, however, Bonn's future position on SNF modernization will depend on what political coalitions can be formed both supporting and opposing NATO nuclear modernization measures. This will, in turn, be tied to the question of how such measures fit in with the long-term views and visions of the FRG's key political figures. A closer look at West German attitudes toward nuclear modernization reveals three political camps with very different positions. Although these camps do not always coincide with party preference in every individual case, they are nonetheless centered in the three major parties that dominate the West German political landscape: the CDU/CSU, FDP, and SPD.

The fault lines dividing these groups are attributable to three factors. The first is diverging attitudes about nuclear deterrence and NATO's current nuclear strategy. The second is differing assessments of Gorbachev and the changes currently under way in the USSR and Eastern Europe, as well as of the implications thereof for Western security policy. Finally, varying opinions on nuclear modernization are also closely intertwined with different visions of the future evolution of East-West relations in Europe, the respective roles of the United States and the Soviet Union, and Bonn's own role in central European politics—especially its ties with the GDR.

The first of these three groups continues to embrace the traditional alliance view on the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence firmly and supports the maintenance of NATO's current strategy of flexible response. It is centered in the CDU/CSU and the West German ministry of defense; it also enjoys the support of several key defense intellectuals scattered across the political spectrum and located at several leading institutes dealing with defense and security policy.

Since the time of former West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Christian Democratic leaders have argued that geography and Moscow's position as the dominant land power on the European continent confront the FRG with a security threat that only the United States can counterbalance. Accordingly, Christian Democrats have tradition-

ally advocated the closest possible transatlantic partnership with Washington; their willingness to host U.S. forces is an attempt to make German territory an equal zone of security with the U.S. homeland.

The same set of reasons has traditionally made the CDU/CSU the West German party most firmly committed to the firm coupling of U.S. and West German security through the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons stationed on West German soil. At the same time, West German conservatives have always been sensitive to the dangers of a protracted military conflict, conventional or nuclear, in central Europe. They have therefore portrayed NATO nuclear strategy in terms of a nuclear tripwire and have pushed in alliance planning for a version of escalation that envisions the use of nuclear weapons on the aggressor's territory—including Soviet territory.

Despite past criticism of U.S. nuclear arms control policy and warnings about German "singularization," this group is still committed to a strategy of flexible response and to the initial use of nuclear weapons and deliberate escalation.¹ Many of its members were critical of, or opposed to, the second zero of the double zero INF Treaty, for they viewed U.S. land-based nuclear missiles as firmly coupling U.S. and West German security. Ideally, the CDU/CSU prefers to maintain a land-based short-range U.S. nuclear presence for its coupling effect; for this reason, many members support the type of package deal involving unilateral reductions and the partial modernization discussed earlier. They believe that a modernization program would entail a simultaneous restructuring of the remaining systems; this would simultaneously extend their range and result in an outcome in which the structure of nuclear weapons on German soil would be militarily robust and politically sustainable, and in which nuclear risk would be better balanced and spread out across the alliance.

Note that this group sees itself as having been reduced to a minority after the collapse of the security consensus in the FRG during the early 1980s. Public opinion polls showing massive majorities against nuclear modernization have clearly put the CDU/CSU on the political defensive; signs of growing divisions even within the conservative camp have occurred. A small but growing number of voices in the party have argued that both the CDU/CSU's strong stance on nuclear deterrence

¹We must distinguish between two different West German fears about "singularization." The first and more traditional concern referred to Bonn's desire not to be the only country deploying a specific nuclear system. This was a major factor in the dual track decision. In the wake of the INF Treaty, the type of singularization West German conservatives expressed concern about referred to the INF Treaty's having left them with a large concentration of short-range nuclear systems that now threatened to become self-detering.

and the accusations that it is a "pro-missile" party have cost the party votes and are in part to blame for the steady downturn in its popularity in recent elections.

Nevertheless, it is a powerful and influential minority—and one upon which NATO policy has been built for much of the postwar period. The CDU/CSU is clearly looking to Washington to assert U.S. leadership on the question of nuclear modernization, but is increasingly careful because it fears having to bear again the brunt of rapid changes in U.S. arms control policy—changes that could catch it off guard, as happened during the Reagan years.²

This group is not only motivated by its commitment to maintaining the credibility of flexible response, but also by its healthy skepticism about the Soviet new thinking and longer-term Soviet ambitions regarding Western Europe. The CDU/CSU is concerned that the Soviets will try to exploit existing antinuclear sentiment in West Germany to push for the denuclearization of Europe. Above all, it worries about how arms control negotiations on shorter-range systems could be stopped short of a third zero. Although acknowledging that NATO's nuclear requirements could change in the future depending on the outcome of conventional arms control talks, this group nonetheless feels that NATO must first get its own nuclear house in order and that the alliance cannot afford to allow its own decisionmaking to become hostage to domestic politics and the uncertain outcome of future arms control negotiations.

In the chorus of West German enthusiasm for Soviet leader Gorbachev, a residual suspicion and tempered warning from this end of the political spectrum about longer-term Soviet political objectives occasionally emerges. NATO's new general secretary, Manfred Woerner, voiced such sentiments in response to a question about whether Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev still aimed to divide Western Europe from the United States:

Certainly! I don't have even the slightest doubt, even if someone over there [in the Soviet Union] has since realized that it is a touchy subject and one must change tactics. Of course there are people who will tell you in private conversation that the Americans must stay. But take the notion of a common European house. It is, of course, very suggestive for the Europeans. We the Soviets, they say, are Europeans—although the largest portion of the Soviet Union is by far Asian. We will build this house together. And there is no space for the Americans. And, I tell you, I will remain skeptical about this notion; as long as Europe is still divided I will not talk about a common house. This we can only do when this house has become a real

²For a good overview of the current situation, see Clemens, "Beyond INF."

house where one can go from one room to another without climbing over a wall. And even then I would say that we need the other superpower to balance the Soviets.³

A skeptical attitude toward long-term Soviet ambitions and the USSR's ability to dominate Europe because of its geopolitical weight not only makes the CDU/CSU a continued firm advocate of a strong U.S. security presence in Europe, but also a driving force behind increased security cooperation in Western Europe—especially between Paris and Bonn. However, such cooperation is seen as a complement to, not a substitute for, the U.S. security umbrella. Indeed, in the debate over the implications of 1992 and increased West European integration, West German conservatives are the first to warn that this should not lead to a premature diminution of the U.S. military presence or to a loosening of transatlantic security bonds. Nuclear modernization is seen as necessary not only to maintain the credibility of extended deterrence and to reinforce the link with the U.S. strategic deterrent, but also as a form of political reassurance between the FRG and the United States at a time of renewed superpower détente.

In the long run, West German conservatives harbor a vision of a unified Europe from Portugal to Poland based on conservative Christian principles. This vision can be traced back to Adenauer; it is one in which Moscow, no longer able to bear the burdens of an empire, allows the countries of Eastern Europe to slowly be integrated into the political and economic institutions of Western Europe. The result is a united Europe that remains a close political and economic ally of the United States, but plays the role of a geopolitical bridge between the two superpowers. It is a Europe that continues to have nuclear forces, however, with the nuclear arsenals of France and the United Kingdom being at the services of a federal European government. This vision has its modern advocates in figures such as Alfred Dregger.⁴

A second group is centered around Foreign Minister Genscher. At the same time, little doubt exists that the West German foreign minister remains committed in principle to maintaining nuclear deterrence. In nearly all his major foreign policy statements he avoids much of the criticism of nuclear deterrence fashionable on the German left, repeatedly stating that no alternative to an alliance deterrence strategy based on an adequate mix of conventional and nuclear weapons exists.

³See Woerner's interview on Südwest TV, Channel 3, June 24, 1988.

⁴See Alfred Dregger, *Der Vernunft eine Gasse. Politik fuer Deutschland. Reden und Aufsatze*, Munich, Universitas Verlag, 1987. See also "Our Responsibility in the World. Christian Democratic Perspectives on German, Foreign, Security, European, and Development Policy" (resolution of the 38th CDU party congress), *CDU Dokumentation*, No. 19, 1988.

Similarly, the foreign minister has repeatedly stated that the alliance should maintain its current strategy of flexible response.

At the same time, Genscher clearly perceives questions of defense and security requirements in more political and dynamic terms. Although supporting the need for nuclear deterrence, the foreign minister always adds that deterrence alone is insufficient to maintain peace and security in Europe. Nuclear weapons, he states repeatedly, must remain as a final "safety net" of security, but this military safety net must be complemented by confidence-building measures and expanded East-West cooperation.⁵

As a result, Genscher clearly sees the future requirements for nuclear weapons in somewhat different terms than do many West German conservatives. Whereas West German conservatives would prefer to see the full spectrum of land-, air-, and sea-based missiles preserved, albeit in significantly smaller numbers, Genscher has indicated quite clearly that a third zero for land-based missiles should not be ruled out. Above all, Genscher has warned against a blind military approach to security, having urged the West to respond to Gorbachev's new thinking by modernizing its own thinking. The foreign minister's attitudes toward modernization are perhaps best summed up in the following passage:

Unlimited armament does not create unlimited security, but balanced and mutual arms control can contribute to more security. The attempt to compensate for disarmament moves by rearming in other areas violates the purpose of an arms control policy aimed at fostering stability as it leads to new instabilities and catalyzes a new arms race. New thinking demands that above the net of deterrence—the emergency net of the Ultima ratio—one creates an additional net based on cooperative structures of military security that reduce the risks of a policy based solely on deterrence.

As realists we know that today's security cannot be based on tomorrow's hopes. But as actors faced with the responsibility for the future, we must start today to create a basis for security that is broader, firmer, and stronger than the one upon which peace currently exists. We must make waging wars impossible in the nuclear age. Simply put, we must make mankind capable of surviving. Have those who always assume the worst case in our relations with the Soviet Union to be the most probable case ever considered that the strategy of deterrence always assumes the best case for the Soviet leadership—namely, that it reacts with reason and responsibility? We are not talking about unilateral steps that will hurt our

⁵See Genscher's speech entitled "New Approaches to East-West Security Cooperation," delivered at the meeting of the Institute for East-West Security Studies, Potsdam, GDR, June 11, 1988 (author's private copy).

defense capability, and no responsible politicians want such steps and for good reason. But why should we, in attempting to create new forms of stability based on cooperation and trust, assume that the Soviet leadership is less responsible and rational than the functioning of deterrence?⁶

What all this means for nuclear modernization remains to be seen. Although supporting deterrence, Genscher has also made clear that he sees no immediate need to decide on SNF modernization, claiming that such decisions should not be made under time pressure and should await the outcome of the Vienna talks.⁷ Genscher is reluctant to subject his country to another agonizing debate over nuclear modernization, especially at a time when the ruling Bonn coalition—and above all, Genscher's own party—is harvesting the political fruit of the INF Treaty and an improving East-West climate.

Moreover, the West German foreign minister is clearly reluctant to take any step that might undermine future arms control prospects and an improving bilateral relationship between Bonn and Moscow.⁸ He was one of the first Western statesmen to urge the West to take Gorbachev at his word and to test the Soviet leader's willingness to improve East-West relations. The subsequent course of Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy reforms has only strengthened Genscher's convictions that Gorbachev offers the West a unique window of opportunity to move toward stabilizing the military balance and creating a more durable system of European security.⁹

⁶See Hans-Dietrich Genscher, "A Plan for All of Europe," *Die Zeit*, October 20, 1988.

⁷See Genscher's interview in *Welt am Sonntag*, August 21, 1988.

⁸That Genscher's most clear-cut statement against modernization came after Chancellor Kohl's October Moscow visit was certainly no accident. See the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 8, 1988.

⁹Genscher said: "I have no doubt that the Soviet desire for disarmament is serious and that words have been followed by deeds. The conclusion of the Stockholm Conference was a first step, for it was there that we first agreed on on-site verification. . . . The second step was the INF Treaty, for here the Soviet Union accepted a Western proposal and showed that it was prepared to accept asymmetrical disarmament. . . . This is also true for Gorbachev's recent announcement—namely, the fact that the Soviet Union sees that it is superior in the conventional realm and that such a step will alleviate the negotiations over conventional stability. This step brings us closer to our goal. We haven't achieved it yet, but we are closer to our goal of eliminating the Soviet capability for high speed and large-scale offensive operations. . . . Let me say one more time that what the Soviets have just announced will, of course, provide an additional impulse to the current negotiations. . . . It is now a question of using the resulting chances, and of putting aside all the despondency and old thinking that exists among Western observers. I, in any case, feel myself confirmed in the conviction I have long voiced—namely, that the secretary general is serious about his desire for a comprehensive change in East-West relations, including the security relationship in Europe through cooperation and disarmament. This lies in our very basic German interests." See Genscher's interview in *Deutschlandfunk*, December 8, 1988.

In contrast to West German conservatives, who fear that Moscow will exploit existing antinuclear sentiment in West Germany to push for the denuclearization of the FRG and eventually to push the United States out of Europe, Genscher has downplayed the dangers of negotiating with Moscow over equal ceilings despite existing asymmetries in existing short-range systems. Indeed, the West German foreign minister has stated that Gorbachev's goal of a "common European home" is not a device to split the alliance but instead is similar to the goal of a new European peace system advocated by NATO.¹⁰

Finally, Genscher's attitude toward nuclear modernization can only be understood in the context of the West German foreign minister's own long-term vision of the future evolution of East-West relations in Europe and of Bonn's role in that process. In many ways, Genscher incorporates many shifts that have occurred in West German foreign policy thinking over the past decade. The staunch Atlanticist of the mid-1970s has come to incorporate the notion of détente as a special German national necessity and responsibility. His increasing embrace of Franco-German cooperation reflects his conviction that the existing degree of West European dependence upon the United States is politically unhealthy and that Europe must gain a greater voice in European security.

Although certainly committed to NATO, Genscher's longer-term goal is clearly a reformed Western alliance with a strengthened European pillar and a reduced U.S. military presence. The FRG's foreign minister has repeatedly emphasized that the bipolar world is coming to an end and that East-West affairs in Europe are in a transition in which the transatlantic relationship can and should be refined for the benefit of all involved. Genscher's enthusiasm for Gorbachev must also be seen in this context. It reflects his belief that Gorbachev's reforms, if successful, might represent a unique historic opportunity to initiate a transition to a system of European security based on a reformed Soviet Union, a militarily and politically restructured Warsaw Pact, and a more equal and balanced U.S.-West European security relationship.

¹⁰When asked whether he shared the conservative view that the Soviets wanted to push the United States out of Europe, Genscher replied in an interview on Austrian television after his Moscow visit in late July 1988, "First of all, in 1967 we in the Western alliance called for the establishment of a European peace system—this is basically the same as what the general secretary means with the common European house, only put differently. One must not delude oneself with regard to one question: The Russians are serious—and they have repeatedly stressed this—when they say that they do not intend to separate Europe from the United States and Canada. This is also not in the interest of the Soviet Union. In many talks I made it very clear that we are pursuing our policy of cooperation with the East—our pioneering role in this policy—as a member of the Western alliance, as a member of the European Community, and as a trustworthy partner of our friends" (Vienna Television Service, July 31, 1988).

It is also a vision in which the FRG would assume a dominant role in managing central European politics. The demilitarization of the East-West conflict in Europe would result in an expansion of German influence in the region based on West German economic and technological performance and would allow Bonn to play a constructive role in central Europe, promoting détente between the two blocs.¹¹ One can argue about whether such a vision is plausible or even desirable. In any case, Genscher has proved to be the consummate domestic politician and currently enjoys the privilege of being the most popular politician in West Germany today. Unlike a U.S. secretary of state, who serves at the wish of the president, Genscher is an independent force in West German politics—and one who has been remarkably skilled in setting the coalition's overall foreign policy tone despite the complaints of some conservative Christian Democrats.

What this means for the future of nuclear modernization remains to be seen. Genscher has clearly pinned his hopes on a scenario in which a Vienna arms control agreement is seen as making any decisions about the modernization of short-range land-based missiles unnecessary. On the other hand, the foreign minister has carefully steered away from a broad critique of flexible response. He has also remained silent on the issue of the modernization of air-based systems and has been less outspoken on the need for reductions in nuclear artillery. In short, although Genscher's long-term vision of European security is clearly moving in the direction of a more limited nuclear deterrent, he continues to play his cards close to his chest where the exact contours and details of his own thinking are concerned.

Last but certainly not least is the West German Social Democratic party. Social Democratic security policy thinking has clearly undergone a transformation and shift to the left in the past decade—a shift that results not only from generational changes, but also from the lessons leading Social Democrats themselves have drawn from their dealings with East and West in the 1970s and 1980s. The past emphasis in SPD security policy on parity and the need to maintain a balanced deterrent—elements so characteristic of Helmut Schmidt's thinking—have rapidly faded with the departure of the former chancellor. Under the auspices of a second Ostpolitik and second phase of détente, Social Democrats have proposed an ambitious restructuring of NATO nuclear and conventional strategy.¹²

¹¹See Genscher's speech at the May 1989 FDP party congress in *Das Parlament*, No. 26, June 23, 1989.

¹²See Asmus, "The SPD's Second Ostpolitik."

In many ways the SPD is the party that has laid out the most clear-cut and coherent comprehensive concept. It is a mixture of disengagement and denuclearization. Although the SPD clearly backs ongoing NATO membership, it calls for radical changes in the nuclear and conventional policies and structures that currently characterize alliance policy. In terms of nuclear strategy, the SPD has abandoned any notions of deliberate escalation and flexible response and has moved toward embracing minimal existential deterrence in which the alliance's nuclear posture is bereft of any war-fighting capability. The resolution on security policy passed in Muenster, for example, rejected both the modernization of Lance and any measures designed as compensation for systems currently being removed under the INF Treaty.¹³ In the long run, the SPD advocates removing all nuclear weapons from German soil and reducing the Western nuclear deterrent to sea-based systems coupled to the U.S. strategic deterrent.

More recently, the SPD has laid out a detailed plan for how the alliance might move in a three-phased process to introduce such policies.¹⁴ The plan only demonstrates how far the SPD has strayed from traditional NATO thinking on nuclear deterrence. Phase one foresees the total elimination of battlefield nuclear weapons such as nuclear artillery in conjunction with conventional arms control, as well as the elimination of the Soviet capability for large-scale offensive operations. The second phase envisions a further reduction in conventional arms along with reductions in air power; each side would be reduced to ten SNF launchers of its choice with a maximum of 50 warheads. A third phase would include the total elimination of substrategic nuclear systems and a shift to a reliance on U.S. strategic forces. A radical revision in NATO's nuclear strategy is coupled with SPD calls for a shift to a nonoffensive conventional defense already called for at the party's Nuremberg party congress in 1986.¹⁵

Such changes are part and parcel of the SPD's estrangement from the very principle of nuclear deterrence as traditionally defined in NATO, which SPD critics see as a relic of the Cold War. In response to critics who argue that such cuts would wreak havoc with existing risk-sharing arrangements in the alliance, leading SPD security experts

¹³See "Resolution on Security Policy," *Service der SPD fuer Presse, Funk, TV.*, September 2, 1988.

¹⁴See "European Security 2000—A Comprehensive Concept for European Security from a Social Democratic Point of View," *Service der SPD fuer Presse, Funk, TV.*, July 6, 1988.

¹⁵The most detailed description of nonoffensive conventional defense can be found in Andreas von Buelow, Helmut Funk, and Albrecht von Mueller, *Sicherheit fuer Europa*, Bernard and Graefe Verlag, Koblenz, 1988.

such as Egon Bahr have publicly claimed that existing risk-sharing arrangements clearly discriminate against the FRG and are no longer acceptable. Current alliance strategy, they claim, is geared to a war-fighting strategy and is therefore decoupling; equal security and just risk-sharing can only be reestablished by a shift back to the reliance on U.S. strategic systems. According to Bahr,

In order to guarantee equal security, the United States would have to guarantee that in the case of an attack on the FRG it guarantees [West German security] with its existence, just as we do with our full existence. This means that there must not be any nuclear weapons on our territory that would limit the war. The so-called nuclear umbrella can exist only by the unquestioned inclusion and direct risk of the Americans through the use of their strategic weapons. . . . After the treaty on the elimination of the intermediate-range weapons, we now have a situation in which the short-range systems are the last U.S. instruments capable of waging a nuclear war in Europe. If they are gone, America faces the need to accept the full risk of nuclear weapons from the very first moment. The elimination of the tactical short-range nuclear weapons on European soil is the guarantee of an almost equal security risk—and this is the future of NATO in general.¹⁶

Such visions are, of course, long term, and to assume that the SPD policy positions are set in concrete would be erroneous. The current party leader, Hans-Jochen Vogel, has made a determined effort to steer the party back toward centrist waters, especially on economic issues. As the SPD's prospects for returning to power increase and it is forced to consider the types of compromises it would have to make in government, its position will undoubtedly be tempered somewhat.

Although inching itself back toward the mainstream of political credibility, the SPD nonetheless sees this mainstream as continuing to shift to the left in its favor, particularly on the nuclear issue. The SPD has not shied away from portraying its calls for changes in alliance nuclear strategy as a test case of NATO's willingness to accommodate "German interests"; such calls have found a receptive chord at a time when German self-assertiveness is increasing as a result of generational change. SPD leaders also feel that trends in Soviet policy will reinforce antinuclear sentiment and further strengthen their hand. They point to recent shifts in the positions of both Genscher and the CDU/CSU as confirmation of a broader trend. In an interview in *Die Welt* on March 5, 1988, Hans-Jochen Vogel defended his party's position on a third zero option in the following terms:

¹⁶See Bahr's interview, "We Are the First Battlefield," *Der Spiegel*, May 8, 1989.

Why should our security be decreased when the Russians always eliminate a multiple of what we remove? . . . Even the Kohl government has in the meantime demanded that the nuclear systems be reduced significantly. Again we have the same picture. Social Democrats propose something that immediately produces indignation and resistance. Some even accuse us of sacrificing national interests. Then in intervals of time that are getting shorter and shorter, portions of the Union adopt elements of our positions and are in turn fought by their own colleagues for precisely this reason. And finally we see the realization of our proposal with the claim that it was always an original Union position.¹⁷

Finally, SPD attitudes toward nuclear deterrence and the modernization decisions facing the alliance are also driven by a benign assessment of Soviet policy. NATO's modernization requirements, according to the party's foreign policy spokesman Karsten Voigt, are only valid if one accepts the underlying assumptions on the nature of the Soviet threat. The SPD, he adds, rejected these assumptions and therefore rejected modernization:

He who proposes to deprive NATO's strategy of flexible response of its nuclear means can only justify this—as the SPD does—by arguing that a robust conventional defense in conjunction with a minimal nuclear deterrent is sufficient to deter a relatively risk-shy Soviet Union that shows no signs of aggressive intentions in a future East-West conflict.¹⁸

Finally, the SPD's stance on nuclear modernization can only be fully understood in the context of its long-term vision of Europe. Social Democrats see Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR as confirmation of precisely the type of reform communism their own Ostpolitik was always designed to help foster. They are convinced not only that Gorbachev is serious about arms control, but that if he is successful in implementing his domestic reform agenda, this success will lead to a restructuring of the Warsaw Pact in military terms and a transformation of Soviet-East European political relations, with a corresponding diminution of Soviet influence and control. This restructuring, transformation, and diminution of Soviet influence and control is the key not only to a restructuring of relations between the two halves of Europe, but also to the type of West European self-assertion and emancipation from the United States that Social Democrats advocate. The result would be the type of European peace order that has been at the core of Social Democratic foreign policy thinking for the past two decades and in which both German states would play avant-gardist détente roles in spurring expanded East-West cooperation.

¹⁷See Vogel's interview in *Die Welt*, March 5, 1988.

¹⁸*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, March 1, 1988.

Needless to say, such a vision has little room for nuclear modernization. SPD leaders have attacked NATO modernization plans as a cover for "rearmament" and as escalation in the arms race that is militarily unnecessary and politically counterproductive.¹⁹ Criticism of FOTL has also been extended to include TASM, which Egon Bahr termed "the greatest danger of compensation for intermediate-range systems" and an attempt to "strangle" the disarmament process.²⁰ Indeed, many Social Democrats are inclined to propose that the West make unilateral concessions, including on nuclear weapons, to assist Gorbachev in his attempts to reform Soviet foreign policy, and criticize U.S. and British insistence on modernization as an attempt by the United States to maintain political domination in the alliance through nuclear weapons.

Social Democrats disagree over how many nuclear weapons they want removed from German soil, with party moderates conceding their readiness to accept the existence of air-based systems. Imagining Social Democratic support for nuclear modernization regardless of the packaging, however, is currently difficult. Instead, the depth of opposition—and the Social Democrats' success in mobilizing opposition—will depend on the nature of any modernization package and on whether it is combined with reductions.

Of course, other potential sources of opposition to nuclear modernization exist. What made the anti-Euromissile alliance in the early 1980s so formidable was the implicit coalition that had formed between such heterogeneous actors as the peace movement, the SPD, and the Soviet Union. At the moment, the peace movement is in a state of disarray. The radical Green party has since moved somewhat to the center. With the prospect of a possible coalition with the SPD at the national level on the political horizon, a debate has broken out over the

¹⁹Hans-Jochen Vogel stated: "The expression *modernization* is deceiving. It is not a question of keeping the existing Lance system modern and operational with new spare parts or through a general overhaul. This is what people normally think of when modernization is discussed. In this case, however, the term *modernization* obscures the fact that 88 Lance systems with a range of some 80 kms are to be replaced by several hundred totally new systems with a range of some 480 kilometers. This is not modernization, but an arms buildup—and in the present situation the FRG does not have a single argument in favor of such an arms buildup" (*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, February 9, 1989). See also Horst Ehmke, "Modernization: False Label for Rearmament," *Vorwärts*, January 7, 1989. In response to press reports on NATO modernization plans involving the extension of the range for remaining short-range systems, SPD presidium member Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul accused the Bonn coalition of trying to hide "the dramatic new nature of the new round of armaments," adding that "the scrapping of the intermediate-range missiles looks like a simple propaganda show, when in the meantime short-range systems are practically being turned into new intermediate-range systems" (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 2, 1988).

²⁰As quoted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 16, 1989.

conditions under which the party might accept West German membership in NATO.²¹ This debate has not necessarily tempered the party's antinuclear yearnings. One obvious factor weighing heavily in the minds of many West German politicians against nuclear modernization is the prospect of rekindling another polarizing political debate, with West German federal elections looming on the horizon in 1990.

Finally, the question of how Moscow will react presents itself. A most interesting development in Soviet policy toward West Germany in recent years has been Soviet attempts to woo West German conservatives. After a hiatus of several years in USSR-FRG ties, Bonn is once again assuming the role of a privileged partner of Moscow in Western Europe, as underlined by the treatment of Chancellor Kohl during his visit to the Soviet capital in the fall of 1988 and by the subsequent Gorbachev visit to Bonn in June 1989. Modernization aside, Bonn has its own interests in maintaining Soviet-West German ties, especially since Moscow has adopted a much more constructive stance on questions such as emigration, treatment of the German minority in the USSR, and inter-German cooperation.²²

Periodic Soviet attempts to pressure Bonn on the SNF issue have occurred. Both the Soviet and the East German media have been carrying on a running campaign against SNF modernization, with East Berlin portraying Bonn's position on the issue as a test case of the West German interest in détente that could affect bilateral inter-German ties.²³ At the opening session of the CFE talks in Vienna in January, the USSR announced that the troops leaving Eastern Europe, in conjunction with Gorbachev's unilateral reduction offer of the previous month, would take their short-range nuclear weapons with them; although the numbers involved were very small (a mere 24 launchers), the proposal attracted much media attention. In mid-April the Warsaw Pact finally tabled a long-expected proposal calling for a third zero.²⁴ Speaking in London shortly thereafter, Gorbachev again intervened in the NATO debate by suggesting that NATO's modernization

²¹Details on these conditions are discussed in work done by Ronald D. Asmus at The RAND Corporation on West German NATO policy. One interesting by-product of the INF Treaty has been the more critical reexamination within the Green party of the stance it took during the Euromissile debate. See, for example, the article by Wolfgang Bruckman, "The Green Disarmament Concept in Crisis: The Military Blocs Have Shown Themselves Capable of Disarming," *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, May 6, 1988.

²²For further details, see Barbara Donovan, "The Soviet-West German Political Declaration," *Radio Free Europe Research*, RAD BR/107 (East-West Relations), June 20, 1989.

²³See *Neues Deutschland*, May 12, 1989.

²⁴See the "Communiqué of the Session of the Committee of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact Member States," *Neues Deutschland*, April 13, 1989.

plans were "bound to affect the Vienna talks, confidence-building measures, and the situation in Europe in general."²⁵ Soviet military officials boldly insisted that an approximate balance existed in short-range nuclear forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and that Moscow was not modernizing its SNF arsenal as NATO officials had claimed.²⁶

In mid-May Gorbachev told Secretary Baker in Moscow that Moscow planned an additional reduction of some 500 warheads in its SNF arsenal in Europe.²⁷ Shortly thereafter, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze adopted a much harsher tone during a trip to Bonn when he suggested that a NATO decision to modernize its short-range forces could compel Moscow to halt the dismantling of its nuclear systems—a threat that was interpreted as Moscow threatening to violate the INF Treaty.²⁸

Although such tactics are typical of the type of carrot-and-stick approach Moscow has adopted so often in the past, the carrot has clearly been more effective in influencing West German attitudes than the stick. Shevardnadze's comments, for example, were quickly rejected by all parties—including those opposing SNF modernization—as an example of Soviet old thinking and meddling in internal West German affairs. At the same time, the overall thrust of Soviet arms control policy and the constant flow of new initiatives from Moscow, though of widely varying significance in military terms, has clearly strengthened the hand of those opposing modernization and shifted the balance in the coalition in favor of Genscher.²⁹

²⁵For Gorbachev's speech in London, see TASS (in English), April 7, 1989.

²⁶See the interview with USSR marshal Akhromeyev in *Pravda*, April 19, 1989.

²⁷See *The New York Times*, May 11, 1989.

²⁸In response to a question as to what the Warsaw Pact response would be to a NATO modernization decision, Shevardnadze replied: "We shall have to suspend the destruction of the SS-23 missiles or create other systems, but that would not be our choice" (*Pravda*, May 14, 1989).

²⁹As one anonymous West German government official noted after Gorbachev's United Nations speech with regard to its impact on the internal SNF debate in the Bonn coalition, "From now on, it will be the Genscher approach. Period" (*The New York Times*, December 14, 1988).

V. FUTURE PROSPECTS

At first glance, the last minute compromise reached at the May 1989 Brussels summit appears to have defused the SNF modernization issue. Indeed, a close look at the documents on the alliance's comprehensive concept issued at the summit demonstrates a robust and strong commitment to preserving NATO's existing military strategy in both the nuclear and conventional realms, as well as broad agreement on general guidelines for dealing with a reforming Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The significance of such documents—and, equally important, the extensive consultations that preceded them—should not be underestimated in terms of the documents' impact upon building and reinforcing consensus within the alliance on such matters.¹

To dismiss the trials and tribulations of the early months of 1989 as simply yet another crisis successfully managed in the annals of alliance history would nevertheless be premature. The SNF modernization question was elevated to a major political issue precisely because it became intertwined with an array of issues: the future West German commitment to nuclear deterrence and flexible response, how the alliance should respond to changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and whether or under what circumstances NATO should consider changes in its own military strategy and force posture, and how the alliance should best respond to the sovereignty issue in domestic West German politics in light of growing West German influence and assertiveness in the alliance councils and in East-West relations in Europe.

None of these issues have been fully resolved. Against this backdrop, there are no guarantees that the SNF modernization issue will not return to haunt the alliance—and several strong reasons suggest it will. In the United States itself, whether the Brussels compromise will be sufficient to convince U.S. Congress to allocate the necessary funds to continue current R&D remains unclear. Although the costs of the FOTL program have been modest, they are scheduled to increase significantly.² The combination of increased costs and the political

¹See "A Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament," *NATO Press Communiqué M-1(89)20*, May 30, 1989.

²Some \$7.4 million was appropriated for R&D for FOTL in 1989, approximately one-half of the Pentagon's initial request. Some \$33 million has been requested for 1990, and \$129 million will reportedly be requested for 1991 (*The New York Times*, February 17, 1989).

attention the issue has generated will increasingly attract attention in the United States Congress at a time when the Bonn government, faced with federal elections, will continue to sidestep the issue. This may make it more difficult for the administration to get ongoing funding approved without some hard questions being raised about the West German commitment to eventual deployment of this system. Despite German claims that this is a national U.S. security decision, the Congress can hardly be expected to continue funding for a system at a time of budget austerity when few if any West European leaders are willing to stand up and be counted as favoring an eventual deployment in central Europe.

Meanwhile, in Bonn the consensus underlying the current coalition's stance on SNF is of uncertain durability and could be undercut by one of several factors. Despite the coalition's efforts to keep the issue out of forthcoming West German elections, the Social Democratic opposition will undoubtedly continue to try to make SNF modernization an issue and to capitalize on real differences between Genscher's Free Democrats and West German conservatives. Genscher would appear to be banking on a CFE agreement limiting the need for SNF modernization and taking the steam out of arguments for FOTL. West German conservatives, on the other hand, might prefer a limited contingent of FOTL but are fighting for their political survival; they are inclined to see the political cost for FOTL as prohibitive. As a result, the real danger remains that national security issues will increasingly become subject to the fluidity and maneuvering of political parties jockeying to maximize their popularity at a time of increasing uncertainty and fluidity in West German politics as the next federal election approaches. In light of public opinion polls showing a strong majority opposing nuclear modernization in principle, any party will find it increasingly difficult to favor any form of SNF modernization for fear of committing political hara-kiri.

As a consequence, the SNF issue has become the proverbial can that has been kicked down the road in the hope that the underlying issues may be resolved more easily in the days or months ahead. Many hopes are currently pinned to the belief that an agreement at the CFE talks in Vienna on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe might ease the pressures on the nuclear issue. Indeed, a major component of the Brussels compromise was the agreement to tie future SNF negotiations to a conventional force reduction agreement.

A CFE agreement along the lines currently under negotiation in Vienna would have important implications for the future SNF debate.

Moves toward conventional parity and a stabilization of the military balance in central Europe would certainly ease the pressures on NATO's nuclear strategy of first use and deliberate escalation.

As asymmetries are reduced, modest reductions in NATO's SNF inventory might be warranted as the number of targets is reduced. If conventional parity is reached, NATO can rely more heavily, but not exclusively, on conventional forces to blunt an attack. NATO could, therefore, consider moving toward a greater reliance on longer-range systems needed to couple U.S. strategic forces to European security by threatening selective use against targets deep in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

A CFE agreement will not necessarily or automatically prove to be a panacea for past differences over SNF modernization. First, a conventional arms control agreement will lead at best to a modest change in NATO's nuclear requirements. The number of fixed targets will remain substantial; even mobile targets will likely experience a modest reduction.³ NATO's nuclear requirements are primarily a function of the alliance's political assessment of how much damage it must be capable of threatening to deter effectively—an assessment that is then translated into concrete numbers by including crucial military criteria such as survivability, penetrability, and the probability of arrival.

Second, rather than ameliorate the SNF dispute, a CFE agreement may well revive old divisions about the future of NATO's nuclear strategy since it will likely generate renewed political pressures for cuts in current nuclear stocks. Moreover, the alliance has painted itself into a corner by relying far too long on the simple and erroneous public argument that the conventional imbalance alone justifies the presence of large numbers of nuclear weapons in Western Europe—above all, in the FRG. In short, the end result of a CFE agreement will likely be a renewed focus on the contentious issue of whether, or under what circumstances, the alliance might consider changes in its nuclear force posture and deterrence strategy in light of additional progress toward reducing the conventional imbalance in central Europe, a further reduction in the Soviet threat, and prospects for additional improvements in East-West political ties.

By kicking the can down the road to a post-CFE scenario, the alliance has indeed bought itself time and some additional latitude on the SNF issue. But a CFE agreement, if achieved, will not automatically resolve the underlying dilemmas or defuse the underlying political pres-

³For background on targeting requirements and the methodology for alliance nuclear requirements, see Ball, "Targeting for Strategic Deterrence."

tures in the FRG. An arms control agreement in Vienna will focus the debate on the question of NATO's post-CFE nuclear requirements, thereby reopening a debate over NATO's future nuclear force posture and the strategy underlying that posture. The compromise achieved at the May 1989 Brussels summit has, therefore, given the alliance a new window of opportunity in which it can try to come to grips with the SNF issue before it again slips into the spotlight of public debate.

The alliance should use this window to deal with the task of trying to define a nuclear posture that corresponds to changing German political requirements, makes strategic and military sense, and does not immediately become hostage to Soviet arms control initiatives or political trends in the East.

Achieving this goal will still entail bridging a considerable divide in the alliance. Outside West Germany, policymakers must better grasp the important shift in West German attitudes toward nuclear weapons and the enduring political pressures this shift has produced. Whereas the presence of such weapons was previously seen (and desired) by West German policymakers as proof of coupling and as a form of political reassurance, it is now increasingly seen as evidence of a unique West German exposure to the dangers of limited nuclear war in Europe. Such trends have only been reinforced by changing Soviet threat perceptions and the process of reform and liberalization in Eastern Europe. Indeed, should the process of democratization proceed and lead to the emergence of governments in Eastern Europe dominated by non-Communist forces, more basic questions about whether such countries should still be considered the "enemy," and therefore targeted, will increasingly grow as an issue.⁴

Of course, considerable uncertainty exists about the future fate of reform in Eastern Europe and the USSR. However, remembering that changing West German attitudes toward nuclear weapons are not being driven solely by Gorbachev and by perceptions of the lessened Soviet threat is important. Rather, the twin forces of 1) the delegitimation in the FRG of a strategy based (in part) on threats to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, and 2) the diminishing threat perceptions, have combined to fuel this process. Although scenarios in which a failure of reform in the East might again lead to a shift in threat perceptions are certainly imaginable, to imagine a major reversal in the erosion of support for NATO nuclear strategy—erosion that has now been under way

⁴The democratization process in Eastern Europe has already had a certain spillover effect during the SNF debate as several West Germans not only questioned the purpose of nuclear weapons targeted against targets on German soil, but insisted that targeting Polish targets too at a time of reform and democratization in that country was immoral.

for well over a decade despite the best efforts of some of West Germany's most renowned strategic scholars—is increasingly difficult.⁵

Several conclusions should be drawn from this reading of political trends in West Germany. First, West German policymakers will continue to face strong pressures for further reductions in the overall numbers of nuclear weapons on West German soil, regardless of the future composition of the ruling coalition in Bonn. Although NATO has already reduced the number of nuclear warheads in the European theater since 1979 from some 7000 to 4600 (and will further reduce this number to some 4000 after completing the INF Treaty reductions), pressures for additional reductions will likely continue.

Second, such pressures will primarily—but not exclusively—focus on short-range systems. Current antinuclear pressures are, of course, focused on the FOTL issue. Equally strong pressures will likely emerge for large-scale reductions and perhaps for the total elimination of nuclear artillery. With shorter ranges and even greater numbers, nuclear artillery is precisely the type of system that smacks of the type of war-fighting capability increasingly anathema to Germans of all political persuasions. Outsiders concerned about lukewarm support for a FOTL should note that support for nuclear artillery is even more shallow than FOTL and extends well into the professional West German military.⁶

Third, if policymakers outside the FRG must better comprehend the pressures facing Bonn for cuts in nuclear stocks, then many West Germans must also face up to the very real concerns that exist among many of Bonn's key allies—concerns that played an important role in the SNF saga of the early months of 1989. Bonn's elevation of arms control to the sine qua non of West German security policy and its rapidly fading enthusiasm to consider even a limited modernization under any circumstances simply reinforced critics' fears. Critics have long argued that Bonn is tied to a questionable course of trying to build security exclusively through arms control and that such a course is dangerous because it makes any modernization or compensation measures politically difficult, if not impossible; it also threatens to lead to a form of structural disarmament that will erode alliance nuclear strategy through the back door and eventually lead to a partial or total denuclearization of West Germany.

⁵See, for example, Uwe Nehrlich and Trutz Rendtorff (eds.), *Nukleare Abschreckung—politische und ethische Interpretationen einer neuen Realität*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 1989, and Karl Kaiser, "Wozu Atomwaffen in Zeiten der Abrüstung?" *Europa Archiv*, No. 9, 1989, pp. 261-272.

⁶See, for example, the comments of General Wolfgang Altenburg on the need for cuts in nuclear artillery in *Der Spiegel*, July 24, 1989.

Many of Bonn's critics were not in principle opposed to the idea of negotiated lower ceilings on the FOTL issue. They wondered, however, how useful agreeing to the principle of negotiations would be when no agreement existed within the alliance about what the final Western goal for such talks should be. Above all, few outside observers believed that Bonn would be willing or able to maintain a position of lower but equal ceilings and withstand the pressures generated by a Soviet third zero option proposal for SNF if the alliance agreed to negotiations on reducing these systems. Whereas West German officials publicly and privately questioned why people were afraid of arms control, worried observers outside the FRG wondered whether any West German government would ever again be able to modernize nuclear weapons on its soil.

In the final analysis, the West German position on nuclear modernization will depend upon the type of alliances that are forged in the current crucible of domestic West German politics and within the alliance at large. Within the FRG itself, two basic alternatives exist. The first essentially corresponds to the position staked out by the current conservative-liberal coalition in Bonn. It is based on a principled commitment to maintaining the credibility of existing NATO nuclear strategy and the preservation of land-, air-, and sea-based nuclear forces for the foreseeable future. At the same time, it embraces the call for reductions down to minimal levels in all categories and the negotiation of lower but equal ceilings. It does not exclude further changes in NATO's longer-term nuclear posture, but would make these changes contingent upon the processes of change currently under way in the East.

One must, however, also contemplate the possibility of a second coalition forming around the Free and Social Democrats—one that would not only oppose modernization but that would call for further cuts in existing nuclear stocks. It would be based on a new interpretation of the requirements of extended deterrence and would limit U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil to a minimal and symbolic number, bereft of any serious war-fighting capability. The weapons would serve a solely symbolic function, constituting a form of insurance against Soviet aggression, and would be limited to air- and sea-based systems. Such a shift would also be complemented by a transformation of existing conventional defense structures to the type of alternative nonoffensive conventional defense strategies advocated by the German left.

The first position would lead to a further, significant reduction in the overall numbers of theater nuclear systems and would likely necessitate some modifications in targeting calculations and the methodology used to determine NATO's overall theater nuclear requirements.

It would, however, keep West German attitudes about the requirements of extended deterrence and flexible response within the confines of existing NATO nuclear strategy and nuclear risk-sharing arrangements in NATO. In contrast, the second position would not only compel a far-reaching change in nuclear requirements, but would also raise important doubts about existing strategy. Although the strategy might still be dubbed flexible response, the alliance would in actuality be moving back to a greater reliance on U.S. sea- and air-based forces, including strategic forces, thereby signaling a shift in past risk-sharing arrangements between the FRG and its allies, especially the United States.

In view of the uncertainties and the potential divisiveness of the issues involved, a perhaps understandable tendency exists to adopt a wait-and-see attitude on the SNF issue and to hope that these issues will gradually sort themselves out in the West German debate. No guarantee exists, however, that such issues will become any easier to grapple with several years hence. Indeed, with the Brussels compromise in place and a CFE agreement still off on the horizon, a window of opportunity exists in which to try steering this debate in a constructive direction.

For Washington to do so, however, requires several things. The first is a better understanding of and sensitivity to the changed domestic political context in which any West German government must operate. Despite the merits of the INF Treaty, it has contributed to creating a climate in which any form of nuclear modernization in the FRG has become politically difficult. Past U.S. policy actions and statements have contributed to eroding support for nuclear deterrence on both the left and the right in West Germany in the past decade.

Second, although rolling back the process of eroding support for nuclear weapons in the FRG will be difficult, a future U.S. administration can nevertheless shape the context in which such issues are debated through its own actions. Washington must be willing to address lingering doubts over future U.S. attitudes on extended deterrence, the U.S. commitment to extended deterrence, and Washington's willingness to continue to bear its share of the burden in current nuclear risk-sharing arrangements.

Bonn's allies must realize that existing political trends in the FRG and a further erosion of West German support for nuclear weapons could easily pull the alliance into a messy debate over future nuclear strategy. Moreover, rising antinuclear sentiment will not be stemmed by skirting around the issue. Rather, the alliance must seek to change the terms of the current debate over nuclear weapons in West Germany. Above all, NATO must better explain why it opposes Soviet

calls for denuclearization and clarify why some level of nuclear weapons will remain necessary even if arms control negotiations lead to an improved conventional balance.

Finally, the United States cannot expect a nonnuclear and divided country such as the FRG to take the lead publicly in formulating NATO nuclear policy. If the United States insists that Bonn publicly call for nuclear modernization, it will likely be met with a deafening silence. Even among West German conservatives who adhere to traditional NATO concepts of nuclear deterrence and who in principle support modernization, a reluctance to risk political capital in light of public opinion trends and fears that subsequent reversals in U.S. policy might again undercut them exists.

Only the United States can take the lead in shaping a new nuclear force posture that better corresponds to German political needs while maintaining some strategic rationale. Washington itself must demonstrate a willingness to assume leadership in shaping future alliance nuclear strategy, especially vis-à-vis a Bonn government facing strong domestic pressure and feeling victimized by past U.S. policy actions. In return, Bonn ought to be granted the predominant voice on the timing and details of any modernization package and its implementation.

The following measures could serve as steps toward reaching this goal. First, while reconfirming its support for the principles of nuclear deterrence and the current strategy of flexible response, the United States should lay out the parameters and principles for a possible restructuring of the alliance's theater nuclear posture with the goal of creating a new structure that would simultaneously satisfy German political needs and make military and strategic sense. This restructuring would entail elements of both reductions and modernization. The objectives would be the following:

- Significantly reducing the overall number of nuclear warheads in Western Europe, especially in the FRG;
- Maintaining a residual number of systems in all categories (land-, air-, and sea-based) for reasons of survivability and credibility;
- Enhancing the remaining systems' range, both for political and military reasons (namely, to defuse German concerns about "singularization" and to maximize operational flexibility);
- Increasing qualitative standards for the remaining systems according to the principle "the fewer the number of systems, the higher the qualitative demands."

Such a restructuring would offer several clear advantages. The bulk of reductions would come from systems with the shortest range and largest numbers—thus, systems of great concern to the Germans, namely nuclear artillery. Similarly, modernization would focus on elements with the greatest range, thus also corresponding to German political needs as well as maintaining a significant amount of operational flexibility. The end goal would be the creation of a smaller, militarily more robust, and politically more durable NATO nuclear force posture.

Such a structure would ideally include a FOTL. From a strict military-operational viewpoint, the most desirable modernization option may well be FOTL.⁷ And in many ways, FOTL, with its extended range, would also seem to correspond to the West German desire for systems with extended range. Nonetheless, that the FOTL issue has become a potent political symbol in a broader and politicized debate—and a lightning rod for criticism—is clear. Currently no consensus for deploying it in the FRG exists, and building one will demand a major investment of effort and political capital. The question is whether retaining a smaller number of FOTLs would become acceptable to a Bonn government as part of an overall package of reductions and restructuring.

While pursuing a strategy of maintaining residual land-based nuclear forces, the short-range attack missile-tactical should be made the highest priority in NATO nuclear modernization. Although dual-capable aircraft have traditionally attracted less political controversy than land-based missiles, no guarantee exists that air-based systems can be kept outside the political fray of nuclear modernization, especially if FOTL must be abandoned for political reasons.

Although conventional wisdom would dictate that any modernization decisions are only feasible in the FRG in an arms control context, the alliance should also give careful consideration to implementing such a restructuring package on a unilateral basis. First, reductions in nuclear artillery would be difficult if not impossible to verify. Moreover, the primary motivation for such a reduction would be internal and political, reflecting above all the need to shore up German support for NATO nuclear strategy. Second, the package's modernization elements should be kept as isolated as possible from arms control negotiations, lest the alliance run the risk of implementing reductions with modernization decisions held hostage to East-West talks.

⁷See Webb and Lund, *NATO's Nuclear Modernization Alternatives*.

A unilateral restructuring would underscore the message that NATO is seeking to define a nuclear posture that is a function of its own political and military needs and criteria, not of the Soviet threat in a process of flux. It would reinforce the message that arms control cannot and should not be seen as an automatic panacea for all security problems. Last, but certainly not least, such a unilateral restructuring proposal would demonstrate that NATO's nuclear posture must have a logic of its own corresponding to Western strategy and that the alliance nuclear forces are not a function of the number of Soviet theater nuclear weapons.

Finally, as the question of the future of nuclear weapons on West German soil is tied up with questions about the future U.S. commitment to European defense, Gorbachev, and Bonn's own role in an increasingly fluid phase in East-West affairs, any U.S. initiative must simultaneously address such concerns. NATO is currently in a transition—a transition being driven by Gorbachev, by internal changes within the alliance, and, above all, by the changing political context in the FRG. Transition offers both opportunities and dangers; the final balance depends in no small part upon U.S. leadership.

Walking the fine line between the necessities of modernization and arms control and striking the proper balance between political and military considerations will not be easy tasks. The approach outlined above certainly contains risks as well. The danger always exists that discussion of a major reduction and possible elimination of nuclear artillery will quickly turn into a *fait accompli*, without parallel consensus occurring over a partial modernization of the remaining elements. Second, such a step would require a reexamination of the methodology used to compute nuclear requirements. Both steps may, however, simply be a matter of time. The consensus for nuclear artillery in the FRG is already weak and brittle, and attempts to prevent further cuts in nuclear stocks with methodological requirements could easily lead to greater public attention on NATO's nuclear methodology.

Above all, the United States itself must realize what is at stake and what the consequences of its actions (or lack thereof) will be. No one is eager to provoke another polarizing domestic clash in West Germany over nuclear weapons similar to the one that occurred in the early 1980s. To provoke a nuclear modernization debate precipitously in the FRG and lose would be a disaster for the alliance. On the other hand, a policy of nonaction also contains risks. Pressures for drastic cuts in nuclear artillery are already mounting rapidly in West Germany. Should the modernization of short-range land-based systems prove politically impossible, NATO might face a scenario in which nuclear

deterrence in the FRG is further eroded and based increasingly on dual-capable air- and sea-based systems. NATO's nuclear posture in the FRG would increasingly become hostage to West German domestic political constraints and Soviet arms control policy, with the United States' long-term ability to station any new nuclear forces perhaps called into question.

Although no one is eager for a contentious and difficult debate over future NATO nuclear strategy, such a debate is increasingly unavoidable. Moreover, it may be the only way to clarify and shore up West German support for NATO's nuclear strategy. West Germans are unlikely to support the strategy if the public perception spreads that it is 1) part of a nuclear war-fighting strategy whose implementation means the certain destruction of West Germany, and 2) an instrument of political hegemony and control over the nonnuclear FRG. On the other hand, they will likely support a modest number of nuclear weapons as a form of insurance in a broader vision that addresses their long-term political needs and aspirations.

Indeed, at some point an open strategy debate may not only be inevitable, but also perhaps beneficial for the alliance—especially if the alternative is a situation in which 1) a growing number of Americans see German calls for drastic cuts in nuclear forces as escapist unilateralism and a backdoor attempt to compel a change in strategy and to shift the burden of nuclear risk away from Bonn and onto the shoulders of its allies, particularly the United States, or 2) West Germans increasingly perceive U.S., British, or French support for maintaining a robust nuclear posture as an attempt to ensure influence and risk-sharing arrangements that are products of an increasingly anachronistic Cold War mindset in a day and age when West Germany was still treated like a defeated country.

As Horst Ehmke, security spokesman of the SPD, said in a speech in late August 1989:

The most difficult question [in European-U.S. relations] and the one that has been avoided up until now, but that really lies at the heart of the dispute on tactical nuclear weapons, is how we want to develop the strategy of flexible response. Flexible response was an unavoidable compromise as we realized that massive retaliation was no longer sufficient as an instrument of deterrence. We all know the evolution [of NATO nuclear strategy] from [Maxwell] Taylor's book, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, to "flexible response." For some eight years we heatedly debated these issues. And this time the debate will take years as well. But instead of maneuvering tactically as we have on the question of when to begin negotiations on short-range nuclear systems, what we need is an orderly and frank discussion on the future of NATO nuclear strategy in the alliance. One of the current

causes of malaise in the alliance is that this debate is not taking place, although everyone knows that this problem exists."⁸

The Bush administration has thus far taken important steps to reaffirm its commitment to nuclear deterrence and to articulate its own vision for the future of East-West relations in Europe. The high marks the president received for his European summitry in mid-1989 were undoubtedly linked to his willingness and ability to address such issues and to lay out at least the broad outlines of a Western vision of beyond containment. The administration should now move to capitalize on that goodwill and develop proposals for a nuclear posture that corresponds to its own vision of beyond containment.

⁸Speech delivered before the German Foreign Policy Association. Reprinted under the title "Perspectives on European-American Relations," *Europa Archiv*, p. 508, No. 15-16, 1989.

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